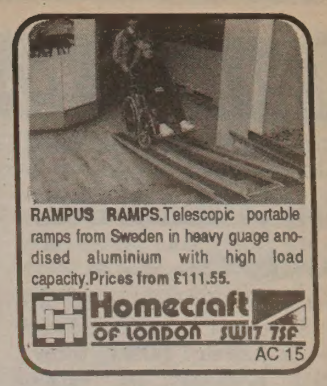
Disability Now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Disabled Persons Act: 2 steps forward

The Government has given the go-ahead to Sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons' Act, which require the identification of disabled school leavers and an assessment of their needs. They will be implemented from 1 February 1988.

"The first disabled school leavers to receive statutory assessment by local authority social services departments will mainly be those reaching the statutory school leaving age in 1990," Minister for the Disabled Nicholas Scott told Tom Clarke MP in reply to a question on 4 November.

"However, I hope that local authorities will be able to apply the new arrangements on a non-statutory basis to as many disabled young people who leave school in 1989 as possible," he added.

Implementation of these sections, and others, has already been held up for over a year because no Government money was set aside to pay for them.

Local authority associations estimate that the cost of implementing Sections 5 and 6 will be £5 million in 1988/9, £14 million in 1989/90 and £20 million a year thereafter.

They accept that the costs for 1988/9 will be met out of the proposed personal social services provision, said Mr Scott, and he promised that in future years the Government would take the costs into account when discussing public expenditure.

John Swannell

Caring at Christmas. *Paul McCartney and Ruby Hodin-Brown, 3½, who has cp and goes to the Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy Centre in London. Music Therapy, the charity, received £7,758 from Paul and EMI records – 25p from every copy of his new album,* All the Best! *sold on 7 November.*

Happy Christmas to all our readers from the staff of *DN*

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Chairman's action agenda jolts The Spastics Society

There is to be a major shake-up of The Spastics Society's constitution, management structure and fund-raising activities in the next 12 months.

PPS

Chairman Douglas Shapland, speaking at the AGM last month, outlined an 8-point agenda, which he believes the executive council must take on board and the "vast majority of the membership of this organisation would welcome."

The agenda gave a sting to the tail of a speech which had reviewed the year's highlights, including National Week.

"Not only is society changing rapidly," said Mr Shapland, "but cerebral palsied persons and people with disabilities of every description are now being recognised as people in their own right far more than ever before.

"Our Society must reflect that change. We must develop an organisation which is responsive to need, with a minimum of administrative bureaucracy. The existing management structure is inadequate for this purpose. Our first priority must be to establish a strong, effective central management."

Having completed his first year as chairman in which he visited all parts of the country and talked with cp people, local group members and staff, Mr Shapland said he was now clear about the issues which need to be addressed.

"There must be a reassessment of existing fundraising activities with the object of increasing income by many millions of pounds," he said. "The central organisation should give added incentives to local groups to embark upon new initiatives by guaranteeing substantial financial backing."

The Society's existing services must be re-evaluated and new priorities set, he went on. "I believe that in the long term our objective should be to wean ourselves away from being the 'direct' providers of education and the providers of care in the institutional sense. These responsibilities should be properly assumed by local authorities in

Continued on page 4
Hon. Treasurer's speech page 4

London has first integrated airbus

Bert Massie (right) and Peter Bottomley try the Airbus lift.

Britain now has the first fully-integrated wheelchair accessible airport bus link in the world.

London Regional Transport last month finished installing lifts and 2 wheelchair spaces on all 12 Airbuses on the Victoria-Heathrow route. The service runs every 20 minutes, 7 days a week. All Airbuses on the Euston-Heathrow route should be accessible early next year.

They will replace the temporary Careline midibus service to Heathrow, run by LRT after Alder Valley's Careline collapsed last January.

Launching the fully-adapted Airbus service, Transport Minister Peter Bottomley said: "This is a world first to meet the needs of disabled passengers and to do it in an integrated way. London can now claim to be Europe's leading capital in transport provision for disabled people."

The hourly central London inter-station bus link for disabled people will continue, connecting with Airbus at Victoria. By the end of January the present temporary buses will be replaced with smaller, more accessible ones, and Liverpool St will be included in the route.

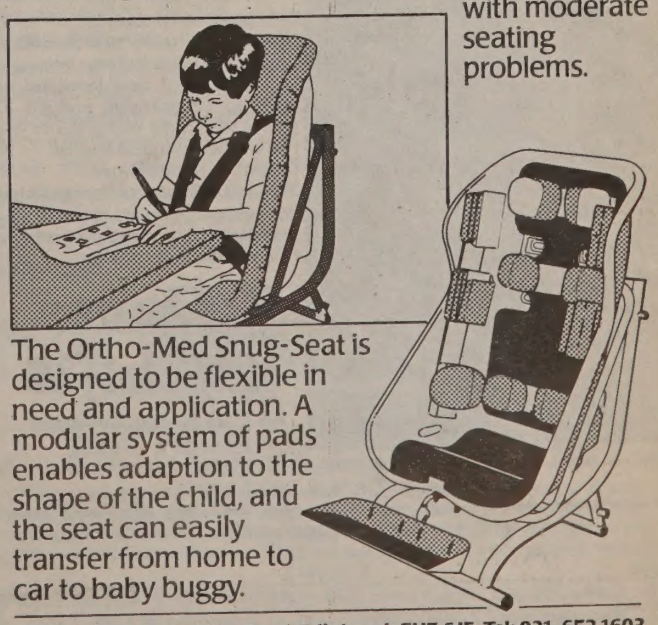
Airbus drivers have been trained in using the lift, wheelchair handling and disability awareness by Steve Cribb, chairman of Hounslow Community Transport, who has a disability.

Bert Massie, assistant director of RADAR, was pleased with the new conversion.

THE ORTHO-MED
REHABILITATION/HEALTH CARE SERVICES

SNUG SEAT

The Ortho-Med Snug-Seat has been designed and developed by Rehabilitation Engineers to enhance the sitting position of the younger disabled child with moderate seating problems.



The Ortho-Med Snug-Seat is designed to be flexible in need and application. A modular system of pads enables adaption to the shape of the child, and the seat can easily transfer from home to car to baby buggy.

ORTHO-MED, 5 Loaning Road, Edinburgh EH7 6JE. Tel: 031-652 1603

Letters to the Editor

Disability *Now* 12 Park Crescent London W1N 4EQ

Unsympathetic doctors . . .

I was interested to read the article "Parents Claim Doctors are 'Unsympathetic'" (DN *October*).

The response by various health personnel to the families of new born disabled or special needs babies is indeed haphazard and the consequences can be tragic for the families concerned. Your article is one of only two examples I have ever seen which attempts to get any proper degree of public discussion on this topic.

You refer to the video *Shared Concern* which I have seen, and I thought you might be interested in the comments I sent to CFL Vision in July.

"Although the tape was not designed to be used by educationalists, nevertheless I would like to offer some comments.

"I thought that during the tape too little time was devoted to hearing from parents, who were given too little opportunity to portray the full extent of the trauma which they suffer.

"Too great a proportion of the tape was devoted to hearing from doctors and, while they did seem to acknowledge a need to improve their professional skills in this area, I was quite taken aback by the degree of complacency which they showed. One doctor, for example, spoke of her multi disciplinary team in a way which seemed to assume that the very existence of such a team dealt with all the difficulties involved in breaking the news to parents. Clearly this is not the case.

"Only one of the parents was given the opportunity to make the point that parents have a very great need to be put in touch with all relevant support agencies. This point should have been elaborated upon and substantiated as much as possible within the context of the Education Act 1981, Section 10. As you know, this section lays upon district health authorities a clear duty to contact the local education authority in the case of a child who may have special needs and also to contact the appropriate voluntary organisation.

"This is a very important item for any training tape to transmit, not only because of its importance as a statutory duty, but also because it is one of the few tangible elements in a very complex and intangible area of work."

To date, I have received no reply to my letter.

Anthony Murphy
Principal Educational Psychologist
Hounslow Local Educatiron Authority

. . . your advice, please

I was concerned to read your article claiming that doctors are "unsympathetic".

The article made two points, one of which was the lack of organised support for the family of a disabled baby.

It is clearly important that adequate counselling should be given as soon as possible to parents of a disabled child so that important decisions can be made on its future, although it may in fact be some time before an accurate prognosis can be given and many decisions, on education, for example, have to wait for assessment of progress.

Nevertheless, about 1 per cent of babies have a major congenital handicap and many more have lesser problems, so health authorities should be prepared with a policy and advice for their employees.

The other allegation, of insensitivity, was not clearly established. Much would depend on the precise cause for complaint among the unsatisfied 40 per cent. It is impossible to measure the degree of sympathy of another person and unreasonable to expect someone who sees similar tragedies every day to be as distressed as the family to which it is an isolated and overwhelming disaster.

Frequently, it is the most junior and inexperienced doctor who is first on the spot and has to answer the questions. He will have had little experience of such work, all too often neglected in the competitive pressure to acquire technical knowledge, and may well only be working on the appropriate ward for 6 months and know little of the services available.

To refuse to answer will surely offend and, despite his best endeavour, so may whatever answer he gives. He may also have been on duty for up to 80 hours non-stop and knows nothing of the parents.

A satisfaction rate of 60 per cent is quite good under the circumstances, but a botched attempt may well cause lasting resentment even when more skilled senior staff offer help later.

What can the profession do to meet this need? Perhaps your readers can advise me.

Dr Howard Allmark
Shropshire Health Authority
The Limes
Belle Vue Road
Shrewsbury SY3 7LP

Jayne Chenery

"I *am* a spastic"

I like saying to people, "I am a spastic." I hate the name cerebral palsy. It makes me sound as if I haven't got a brain.

I am a spastic because my muscles do spasms. My brain works very well but my arms and legs don't.

I am 14 years old and have my Bronze Award for steering my electric wheelchair. I go out to discos and clubs.

I use a special computer with switches for all my school work. I write songs too.

My mum was at the AGM and told me about people wanting to call The Spastics Society something else. I don't think it's right to change the name.

Jayne Chenery
Paignton, Devon

Parents help monitor community homes

Maintaining a high standard of care in staffed community homes for mentally handicapped children and adults is a matter of serious concern to parents and guardians.

Whilst waiting for DHSS to pontificate on the responsibility for monitoring (DN, *September*), your readers may be interested to know what is happening in the Bath Health District.

This authority was one of the pioneers in placing its most severely handicapped clients in ordinary housing, and its 12 staffed homes provide short-term relief and long-stay care for both children and young adults.

Parents are already involved in monitoring processes in 2 ways.

First, unofficially: each home is represented on the Committee of the W.A.T.C.H. by at least one parent user. Problems, suggestions or requests for assistance (eg holiday funding, leisure equipment) are transmitted to our monthly meetings by these representatives and the District Mental Handicap Manager is usually in attendance to answer queries or initiate action. Staff are encouraged to share in a common impetus towards a better quality of life for the residents.

Secondly, over the last 2 years, the health authority itself has tried out several pilot monitoring schemes with small teams consisting of parents (usually from a different home to the one under survey) and professionals such as a clinical psychologist, social worker or community nurse.

Parents played a very active role, for example, in devising confidential questionnaires or planning workshops and the views of staff on format and content were again valued. This project has resulted in a recommendation to monitor each long-stay home every 2 years using a joint questionnaire/workshop approach, and the vital follow-up procedures are now being looked at.

In the intervening years, a House Programme Plan meeting will be held, both exercises being triggered and supervised by the local Community Development Teams.

We were delighted recently when the parents and staff of one home *as a group* worked through the Open University/MENCAP course "Patterns for Living", and gained new insight into each other's attitudes and anxieties. A splendid foundation for effective *self*-monitoring as a further safeguard of standards.

Incidentally, W.A.T.C.H. is the old hospital League of Friends, re-named and re-directed. So don't wait for "them" to do something – get cracking!

Raymond Theobald
Chairman
Wilts and Avon Trust for Community Homes

Apply *now* for a postal vote

Your front page article (DN *October*) described the problems faced by disabled people when voting.

As an occupational therapist and a political party helper, I can see the difficulties from several views.

I would advise any disabled person to find out where their polling station is, and if access is too difficult, apply *now* for a postal vote for the following reasons.

1 The postal vote application has to be signed by a doctor or nurse and it may take time to arrange this. You usually have about 4 weeks' notice of a general election and the latest date for receipt of postal vote applications is usually about 2 weeks before the election.

2 Voting has to be held in the polling district where you live. In many cases the polling station is a school and the room used is out of the way in order not to disrupt lessons. This is often inconvenient for disabled people as car access may be difficult.

3 If your MP or councillor resigns or dies an election is called and you should be prepared so that you have the same opportunity to vote as an able-bodied person.

Mrs Felicity Crofts
Nottingham

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(sic)

DN's diary column
by Julian Marshall and Karen Wingate

Not cricket

Sports Minister Colin Moynihan should have been guest speaker last month at the launch of the Greater London Association for Disabled People's report, *Sport for All*. But he failed to turn up. Apparently, he'd just popped over to India for a weekend to lend support to our boys in white on the cricket field (it didn't work – they lost), and missed his flight back. A red-faced civil servant had to read his speech for him.

Two nations

As acronym fever continues to sweep the country's media, what with yuppies, dinkys (Dual Income, No Kids Yet) and after the October financial crash, puppies (Previously Upwardly-mobile etc), the news is that a Manchester employment agency has coined a new term, which with any luck, like the word "gay", will replace the original meaning. "Cripples" are defined as southern careerists who turn down promotion involving a move elsewhere in the country because of fear of being unable to re-enter the high price property market. Send your reactions to Stephen Dixon, director of Hestair Services, Manchester.

Chain reaction

There was an unfortunate misprint in the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* 22 October account of an auction held in Immingham. The auction was to raise cash to buy a local boy with cerebral palsy a Turbo-freedom "wheel chain". I've heard of being "wheelchair bound", but isn't this going a bit far?

Mugger

Remember the disabled handbag snatcher *(sic, August)?* Well not long ago, *The Sun* ran a story of a one-legged man who went one better. Robert Donaldson, 46, apparently ran down a shopper in his chair, beat him with his walking stick, then as *The Sun* put it, "did a runner" (geddit?) with £9 and a bottle of vodka. The "crippled thug", as they dubbed him, was found guilty of robbery and sentenced to 9 months in prison.

Contributions, please, to DN

Computer user?

I am a lecturer at Coventry Polytechnic, and with colleagues at Warwick University I am carrying out research into computers and the disabled.

I am writing to ask whether any of your readers might be willing to help our research by taking part in a survey we are doing into disabled users' views of existing computerised systems. The survey is in the form of a short questionnaire.

We would be very grateful if anyone using a computer or computerised aid would contact us at the address below.

Carol Vella (Mrs)
Technology and Special Needs Survey
Psychology Department
University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 7AL

MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

HOUSE OF LORDS

Income support: Lords say look again at effect on people with severe disability

Lord Carter (Labour), introducing an important debate on the needs and problems of disabled people in the Lords on 28 October, used the opportunity to talk about the changes in the Social Security system. He objected to the fact that many new severely disabled people will be worse off under the new system. He also questioned whether the Social Fund would be adequate to provide for disabled people's needs, especially as any form of help would be loans rather than grants.

He was supported by Lords from all parties who called on the Government to look again at the effects of the charges on severely disabled people.

Lord Swinfen (Conservative) was concerned about local authorities having to "top up" payments – the difference between what residents can claim in board and lodging payments and the amount it costs charities to provide accommodation. While local authorities contribute towards these costs, he noted that many are only paying with "the greatest of reluctance and at figures well below what is required."

Replying for the Government, The Earl of Arran acknowledged that there was a "small number" of severely disabled people who would experience problems under the new system and that the Government was looking again at their position.

He defended the Social Fund claiming that it would provide more flexible help than the present system.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

£10 million for haemophiliacs

All sides of the House welcomed the announcement on 16 November that the Government is making £10 million available to help haemophiliacs infected with HIV virus from contaminated blood product factor 8, supplied by the NHS. The fund is to be administered by the Haemophiliacs Society.

But the mood changed when Health Minister Tony Newton would not guarantee that those receiving money would not have it deducted from their benefit entitlements.

Loving thy neighbour *Lottie Jones of Swansea was winner of the Grand Prix National Carer of the Year Award last month. For 10 years she has cared for her neighbour Evan Evans who is too ill to leave his bungalow, as well as for her disabled husband. She is shown here with Mr Evans and her cut-glass trophy.*

"Poor" access to sport in London

Sports opportunities for disabled people in Greater London are poor, says a report published last month.

Based on research in the boroughs of Lewisham and Southwark, the Greater London Association for Disabled People's report *Sport for All?* found:

- Provision of facilities is patchy and they are under-used by disabled people, being inaccessible and little known about.
- Leisure services departments do not take an active enough role, but GLAD feels greater disability awareness among service providers and greater access for users could be achieved in a relatively short time.
- Poor transport to and from facilities particularly hampers disabled people's participation in sport.

The report recommends each local authority should publish a policy statement and plan of action in consultation with local disability groups.

Implementing this policy should be the responsibility of a senior leisure services officer.

GLAD also recommends that the Regional Sports Council should take a strong strategic role in London, working with statutory and voluntary bodies to support sports associations for mentally and physically disabled people.

"Our report shows that a great deal can be done, even within the existing limited resources if the will is there and co-ordination can be improved," said Leslie Marks, chief executive of GLAD.

Sport for All?, *GLAD, 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA, £5.45*

Welsh design wiz wins Schools Prize. *Ian Lundy (*left*) of Cwmtawe Comprehensive School, Swansea has won a 1987 Schools Design Prize for his adjustable work surface for disabled people. Ian shared a £400 prize with his school for the surface, designed for 13-year-old Andrea Griffin (*right*), who has a congenital bone abnormality. It can be tilted for reading and drawing and is easily operated with one hand.*

Woman jailed for no TV licence

A 56-year-old disabled woman jailed for not paying her TV licence was released when a pop star paid the money.

Sylvia Wright, from Shirebrook, Derbyshire, had spent 6 of her 30 days in Newhall Prison before Steve Hackett, ex-guitarist with super-group Genesis paid her £110 fine.

She lives on £37 a week disability allowance. Only "by the grace of God" was he not living in poverty too, said Hackett.

News on Sunday

Employment with ESF help

by Ian Sutherland

Innovative use of grants from the European Social Fund (ESF) for work-related training could open the door to mainstream employment for disabled people, it was claimed last month.

Dr Rosemary Abbott, project director for the Epilepsy Association for Scotland, told delegates at a joint European Economic Community/Strathclyde Regional Council conference in Glasgow that projects sponsored by the ESF could result in disadvantaged young people heading for open-market employment.

"Disability *per se* does not prevent young people from getting jobs," she said. "Often disabled youngsters have poor school records and they are competing for work against a background of widespread unemployment.

"If a training organisation for disabled people is aggressive enough jobs *can* be found."

She described the Epilepsy Association's Mavisbank Garden project in Glasgow, which is currently training 30 people aged between 18-25 years (half with epilepsy and the rest with a range of disabilities) in horticultural skills. Six trainees have already left the project to take up mainstream employment.

The ESF is also helping to fund Glasgow's growing Goodwill enterprise, which refurbishes furniture and domestic goods for resale through its own chain of shops. Of the 100 staff, 52 are disabled.

Goodwill director Colin Williams said ESF is fundamental to the project's training operation. "Without a training programme we would simply have a stable workforce without throughput," he said.

Jim Nisbet, Strathclyde Region social work department's ESF liaison officer, said it was vital that groups wanting ESF funding for training initiatives contact their local council as early as possible in the planning of a project.

He felt that not enough groups were making use of ESF support, though social services departments are keen to advise them in developing ESF-linked projects.

You can qualify for the ESF training system in 3 ways: if you are registered disabled, long-term unemployed or aged between 18 and 24. Dr Abbott was concerned that the need to be registered might exclude those who deliberately avoid registration because they feel it damages their employment prospects.

Most EEC delegates came away impressed with Britain's imaginative use of ESF resources to provide job-training for disabled people.

Christmas Coke

This Christmas you could win £5,000 if you enter a competition which will raise money for charity too.

Coca-Cola and Schweppes Beverages will be offering £50,000 in prizes, as well as donating £50,000 to 14 charities, including The Spastics Society.

The competition is open to customers of all outlets taking part and involves answering some multiple-choice questions and completing a tie-breaker For each entry the company will donate 50p to the charity you select on the form. So drink for charity! *And drive safely.*

Aspiring to a better life

Developing a realistically priced robot arm, which can be attached to a wheelchair and used by severely disabled people to lift a drink or reach for a book, is one of 4 research projects for which the London Spinal Unit needs money.

A national appeal for £600,000 was launched last month by ASPIRE (the Association for Spinal Injury Research, Rehabilitation and Reintegration) at a reception in the House of Lords sponsored by Hoover.

The appeal is supported by the Prince of Wales.

The spinal unit, based at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital at Stoke Mandeville, has over the last 5 years helped about 500 young people who are permanently paralysed by spinal cord injury. Now it needs money for practical research.

The other 3 projects are a 5-year clinical trial of 500 quadraplegic and paraplegic people which will use electrical stimulation on paralysed muscles and could lead to a system which can be implanted to restore movement; "Eyewatch", a system of communication for severely disabled people, developed with Marconi; and a database for clinical research into spinal cord injury that will also enable the Unit to develop a personal rehabilitation programme for each patient.

Spinal Cord Injury Research Appeal, ASPIRE, 16 East Heath Road, Hampstead, London NW3.

A lordly Robot Reagan lifts his mechanical arm. Developed by Spitting Image for exhibition use, the technology could be used by disabled people.

★ The Prince of Wales as President of his Advisory Group has launched a new design award. Sponsored by Nationwide Anglia Building Society and the National House-Building Council, it aims to encourage private house-builders to plan for the evolving needs of all the family. This year the award focuses on accessiblity and security. Entry forms from Claire Adams, 37 Dean Street, London W1V 1AP. Closing date: 30 May 1988.

No cartoon this month: Wendy Wheeler is having a baby.

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Urgent projects tipped bank balance

The executive council of The Spastics Society deliberately turned a potential £½ million surplus into a £½ million deficit last year, honorary treasurer Bill Huddleston told the AGM.

The money was spent improving standards of care in centres, providing independent living for school-leavers, replacing the collecting dolls which many people with disabilities find offensive and developing shops.

"These were projects which I'm sure you will agree were more important and more urgent than a balanced account that year," he said.

Another 60 fundraisers were taken on by the Society and fundraising went up by £1.3 million. Altogether, fundraising increased last year by 10 per cent net.

Mr Huddleston said it was a time of rapid change when the Society was trying to keep ahead in its quality of care and it was only too easy to be mesmerised by financial problems and measure success only in financial terms.

Certainly there had been measurable progress in the last 5 years: a 40 per cent increase in services to cp people, including another 3,000 helped to better lives in a period when those helped were on average 30 per cent more disabled. Ten per cent of the adults in residential care now live independently.

An example of progress that cannot be measured by money alone was the 200 people in special placement schemes who might have been at home or in care but for the efforts of negotiators.

The cost to the Society was only a few thousand pounds. "These people may earn between them some £20 million over the next 20 years," he said.

Chairman's action agenda

continued from page 1

their statutory roles."

While acknowledging that future Government policy might press the Society in the opposite direction, he was sure that it should never be seen as the sole provider of all the needs of cp people. "Our efforts must be far more orientated towards the pioneering role, the advocacy role, the information giving role, than they are at present," he said.

He emphasised the needs of young parents, the young adult school leaver and elderly parents of cp people.

He said young parents, and indeed others, did not want to be "driven from pillar to post" looking for help; they wanted advice and information in one place. He believed there should be a "centre of excellence" within the Society which would disseminate information to local level.

He argued that when local authorities come to implement the Disabled Persons Act which, among other clauses, requires a disabled school-leaver to be properly represented during an assessment, "they will find it nigh impossible to provide that advocacy. What an opportunity we have as a Society to take the initiative by offering that service on a proper financial basis to local authorities," he said.

Mr Shapland found it "a great disappointment" that with cp people on the executive council and other committees so few were employed by the Society. Problems of accessibility at Park Crescent and Fitzroy Square were no excuse, he said. "If we are to achieve credibility in the eyes of the world and in the eyes of people with disabilities, we must review our procedures."

He emphasised the "woefully inadequate" amount of physiotherapy time parents receive for their cp children from their local health authorities. He thought the service in the Society's schools was good, but after school it virtually ceased. "The Society needs to re-examine its whole approach with a view to vastly expanding its provision of all therapy services," he said. He rejected the argument that the policy wouldn't work because of the national shortage of therapists and argued that the right working environment would always attract good professionals.

While the Society had made "enormous strides" in improving residential services, on community social work "we have really stood still," he said. "It is an area about which I am very concerned."

Two other major issues on Mr Shapland's agenda were the Society's name and communication, both within the Society and between the Society and its local groups.

Having listened to arguments for and against changing the name, he was certain that "we must find an alternative name . . . sooner rather than later." The name must be acceptable to cp people, hopefully one that could not come to be used in a derogatory way and that would enhance fundraising.

He had heard many complaints about poor communication in the Society. For a start, he said he would like to see a regular bulletin for local groups setting out executive council policy decisions and another for staff giving major management decisions.

Mr Shapland promised that much of his agenda could be implemented by the next AGM and he intended to circulate a progress report in the Spring.

"For the last 18 months we have had the period of long term planning," he said. "I want the next 12 months to be our year of action. The greatest compliment we could pay to founder members of the Society and the many people at national and local level who have contributed so much in the last 35 years would be to bring the Society towards the next century by building on their achievements."

The speech drew widespread praise. "Refreshing, hard-hitting and courageous," commented Barbara Moss, chair of the North London Group and vice-chair of the London Regional Committee. "Responsibility has been put fairly and squarely on the executive council – that's a shift of direction."

"I thought it was a very good speech, concise, provocative, laying out clearly the objectives we should be looking at in the next 12 months," said North-East Regional Manager Ian Croft.

John Per, vice-chair of the Alpha Advisory Committee, was also pleased. "His speech is facing up to some of the issues we've been talking about for ages, such as inaccessible buildings," he said. "There's no way that can be ducked any longer."

For a full copy of the speech contact Mrs Maree Ley, tel: 01-636 5020 ext 219.

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New Social Security Act: Of benefit to how many?

Brian Lamb argues that many disabled people will lose out under the new system, and on page 6 Virginia Alison explains how it will work.

Now that the final rates for the new Income Support Scheme are known, it is clear that many new claimants coming into the scheme after 11 April 1988 will be worse off than their disabled peers who claimed under the old system.

Also those people whose existing benefits are "protected" under the new scheme will have them eroded by inflation until they decline to the level of the new rates.

Seven disability organisations including the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People, Disability Alliance, the Royal National Institute for the Blind and The Spastics Society, have been warning the Government of the consequences of the new scheme for over 2 years. They have tried to devise ways in which severely disabled people could be included in the scheme without losing the entitlements that help them to maintain an independent life in the community. These talks failed because the Government refused to fund any of the solutions proposed by the consortium.

The result is that the shift to Income Support will mean that 40 per cent of newly disabled pensioners, and at least 15 per cent of newly disabled younger people, will be worse off under the new system: 236,000 newly disabled pensioners will lose up to £5 per week and 44,000 newly disabled pensioners will lose £5 per week or more.

Overall, an estimated 500,000 disabled people will lose out.

The rules for claimants have indeed been simplified, as the Government claims, with the hope that this will lead to more disabled people taking up the benefits they are entitled to. But this has been at the expense of being able to tailor benefits to individual needs.

Paradoxically, for a Government which talks of targetting benefits to those most in need, severely disabled people will lose most under Income Support – over £50 a week in some cases – while some less disabled people stand to gain by £5 a week.

Example

A single 23-year-old woman with MS, in a wheelchair, receives £122.25 supplementary benefit per week: £39.90 single householder long-term rate, plus extra heating, laundry and baths, 18 hours a week domestic help and wear and tear on clothing.

On income support, this would be replaced by an under-25 personal allowance (£26.05), disability premium (£13.05) and severe disability premium (£24.75), totalling £63.85 – a weekly loss of £58.40.

The severe disability premium is also very restrictive: it is available only to a person living on his or her own.

Last month the Government finally admitted that something must be done for those severely disabled people who stand to lose large amounts.

In reply to persistent questioning from both sides of the House of Commons, the social services Minister, John Moore, said that he recognised that severely disabled people "do not fit naturally into the system".

"We must find a way of targetting more effectively those few people whom we have not been able to recognise within the system," he added.

The consortium is now seeking on urgent meeting with John Moore to see if some last minute agreement can still be reached on how to protect severely disabled people.

There is still some dispute about how many will lose by as much as £50 a week. The Government's estimate falls well below that of the consortium which is insisting that a solution must be found which ensures that *all* severely disabled people will have the financial support necessary to live independently in the community.

It is clear that any concession the Government makes to severely disabled people will not help those people destined to lose smaller amounts.

As disabled people start to find their benefit eroded by inflation, and as many newly disabled people find they get less benefit than their disabled peers who were claiming before April 1988, the Government's assurances that there will be no cash losers under the new system may ring hollow for those struggling to live in the community.

For more advice and information about claiming benefits, please contact your local citizens advice bureau, welfare rights workers at your town hall, law centre or advice centre, or local organisations of or for disabled people, eg, DIAL or MENCAP. If you find it difficult to travel, check whether they run a visiting service.

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Your guide to the new benefit system from April 1988

Under the Social Security Act 1986, substantial changes were made to the social security system.

Some of these changes have already come into effect. For example, Maternity Grant and Death Grant have been replaced by means-tested payments; statutory maternity pay has been introduced; reduced rate Sickness and Unemployment Benefit and Maternity Allowance have been abolished; and help with mortgage interest repayments has been cut.

The Act has also introduced changes to Housing Benefit and the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) and has replaced Family Income Supplement (FIS) with "Family Credit".

The rest of the changes come into effect on 11 April 1988.

Supplementary Benefit will be abolished and replaced by weekly payments of "Income Support" plus discretionary loans and grants from the "Social Fund".

Income Support is intended to replace scale rates of Supplementary Benefit and its different rates for householders and non-householders and short and long-term claimants. It is also supposed to compensate for the loss of extra weekly payments, some one-off Single Payments and the 20 per cent of your rates which will not be covered by Housing Benefit.

The Social Fund is intended to replace Supplementary Benefit Single Payments and Urgent Needs Payments.

INCOME SUPPORT

What will I get?

You will get a personal allowance, the rate depending on your age and whether you are a single person or a couple. You can also get additions for dependent children.

On top of this you may qualify for a flat-rate premium if you are disabled, a pensioner, a family or a lone parent. (*See table below).*

How do I qualify?

First, you must meet all the general and particular conditions of entitlement to Income Support. Like Supplementary Benefit, there are several exceptions to these rules, most of which favour people with disabilities.

Age You must be aged 16 or over when you first claim Income Support. But unless you have a good reason not to be employed or not to be on a Government training scheme, eg, due to your disability or being a lone parent, your ability to claim before the age of 18 will be restricted.

Savings If your total savings come to less than £3,000, they will be ignored altogether. If you have £6,000 or more, you will not be able to get any Income Support at all. If your savings come to somewhere in between, the DHSS will reduce your benefit by £1 a week for each £250 or part thereof between these two limits.

The savings limit for a child to qualify for the Disabled Child Premium is £3,000.

Employment You will not normally be eligible to claim Income Support if you are in paid employment for 24 hours or more a week. But if, due to your mental or physical disability, your earnings capacity is reduced to 75 per cent or less of what you might otherwise be expected to earn, then you will not be treated as if you are in paid work.

Earnings The amount of earnings you can keep without your benefit being reduced will rise from £4 to £5 a week.

People who receive the disability premium, lone parents and couples who have been unemployed for more than 2 years will be able to keep £15 a week.

These new figures are less income tax and national insurance contributions. But you will no longer be allowed to offset your other expenses, eg, fares to work and the cost of substitute care for dependents.

Disability premiums

To qualify for the **Disability Premium** you must receive Attendance Allowance or Mobility Allowance or Mobility Supplement or Invalidity Pension or Severe Disablement Allowance or an Invalid Carriage, or be registered blind or have been incapable of work for 28 weeks.

The Severe Disability Premium can be paid at the same time as the Disability Premium or Higher Pensioner Premium. To qualify, you must receive Attendance Allowance and no one should be receiving Invalid Care Allowance because they are caring for you. You should also be living alone, although exceptions are made in the case of other people receiving Attendance Allowance, boarders and, the first 12 weeks after joining the household, a live-in carer.

The Disabled Child Premium can be paid at the same time as any other premium. It is payable where at least one member of the household is your dependent child.

Other premiums

The Family Premium can be paid at the same time as any other premium. It is payable where at least one member of the household is your dependent child.

The Lone Parent Premium is payable, on top of the Family Premium, to lone parent families.

The Pensioner Premium is payable if you or your partner is aged 60-79.

The Higher Pensioner Premium is payable if you or your partner is aged 80 or over *or* aged 60-79 and receiving one of the qualifying conditions for the Disability Premium (except incapacity for work) *or* if you are aged 60-80 and received the Disability Premium within 8 weeks of your 60th birthday.

Transitional Protection

If you are receiving Supplementary Benefit the week before 11 April 1988 *and* your total entitlement is higher than Income Support, you will continue to get the same amount as you did before. In other words, what you get at the moment will be protected in cash terms, but you will not get the usual increase in April which takes account of the rise inflation. You will continue to be "protected" until the rate of Income Support catches up over the years.

The only exception is for those getting £10 or more each week as a Supplementary Benefit addition for domestic assistance. Any amount over this figure will be protected in line with inflation.

Your benefit will be paid in the form of Income Support plus a "transitional addition" to make up the difference.

If your total entitlement to Income Support is higher than for Supplementary Benefit, you will get the new, higher amount.

If you lose entitlement to Income Support you may lose your entitlement to a transitional addition in future.

THE SOCIAL FUND

What can I get?

Four types of help are available from the Social Fund, but only to those who have less than £500 in savings. Loans and grants can be made from a minimum of £30 to a maximum of £1,000.

1 Community Care Grants These can be paid to anyone getting or likely to get Income Support, and are intended to help you move from residential or institutional care into the community; stay in the community, rather than enter residential or institutional care; help in exceptional or emergency situations.

Eligible expenses include removal costs and setting up home with basic furniture and household equipment.

You may be asked to check whether help is available from other sources before the Social Fund is prepared to help, eg your local authority or a charity. But if your application is successful, you will not have to pay back the grant.

2 Budgetting Loans You can apply for one if you have been receiving Income Support for at least 6 months. They are intended to help you meet important, irregular expenses, eg furniture, household equipment or fuel meter reconnection charges, where a loan is required to prevent hardship, damage or risk to health and safety.

All these loans are repayable by direct deduction from your weekly benefits at the rate of between 5 per cent and 25 per cent of these benefits. Repayment must normally be completed within a maximum of 18 months.

Social Fund officers will check whether you will be able to repay the loan and whether or not somebody else could meet your need, eg a friend, neighbour or charity.

3 Crisis Loans You can apply if you are on a low income, even if you do not qualify for Income Support. They are only payable in cases of emergency and are always repayable in the same way as Budgetting Loans. Social Fund officers will again make similar checks.

4 Funeral and Maternity Payments These are not intended to be cash limited and are not repayable. So if you have a baby or are responsible for arranging a funeral you should always be able to get them, provided you have savings of less than £500.

Each year, your local DHSS office will be allocated a fixed budget from which to make one-off loans and grants. But, unlike Supplementary Benefit, you will not have any strict, legal entitlement to help. Payments will be made at the discretion of Social Fund officers who will make loans and grants to people who are considered to belong to "priority groups" and have "priority needs".

People with disabilities will generally be given priority.

Social Fund officers must bear in mind how much money is in their budget and what their priorities are at the time you apply. Just because someone else received help is no guarantee that you will get the same help with the same need. However, it should always be possible to get Funeral and Maternity Payments.

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Do you have:
– the determination to establish and run a training project.
– experience of the needs of people with disabilities.
– commitment to working in a multi-racial, inner city community?

Then we're interested in hearing from you for the post of Manager of Microjob Limited. This is an exciting project, set up a year ago to help people with disabilities train for and find jobs in information technology. It has been set up by the London Boroughs of Camden, Islington and Southwark, with the City University.

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Salary £14,547 to £16,557 inclusive

As manager you'll be involved in the establishment and consolidation of the project and will be responsible for its day to day management. You must demonstrate an ability to cope with the policy and operational demands of an innovating project funded by local authorities and the European Social Fund. You must have experience of the varied vocational needs of people with disabilties and be able to manage a team of six staff. If you have experience of the use of computers in a working environment so much the better.

This post is funded until June 1988 and an application for a further three years funding is currently being processed.

Microjob welcomes applications from candidates regardless of sex, race, ethnic origin or sexual orientation and will particularly welcome applications from people with first hand experience of disabilities.

Application forms can be obtained from Caroline Reeson, Borough Employment Office, 49-59 Old Street, London EC1 9HX. Telephone 01-253 8069.

Applications should be returned by 18th December, 1987 and it is expected that interviews will be held in early January.

WEEKLY BENEFIT RATES FROM 11 APRIL, 1988

INCOME SUPPORT (replaces Supplementary Benefit)

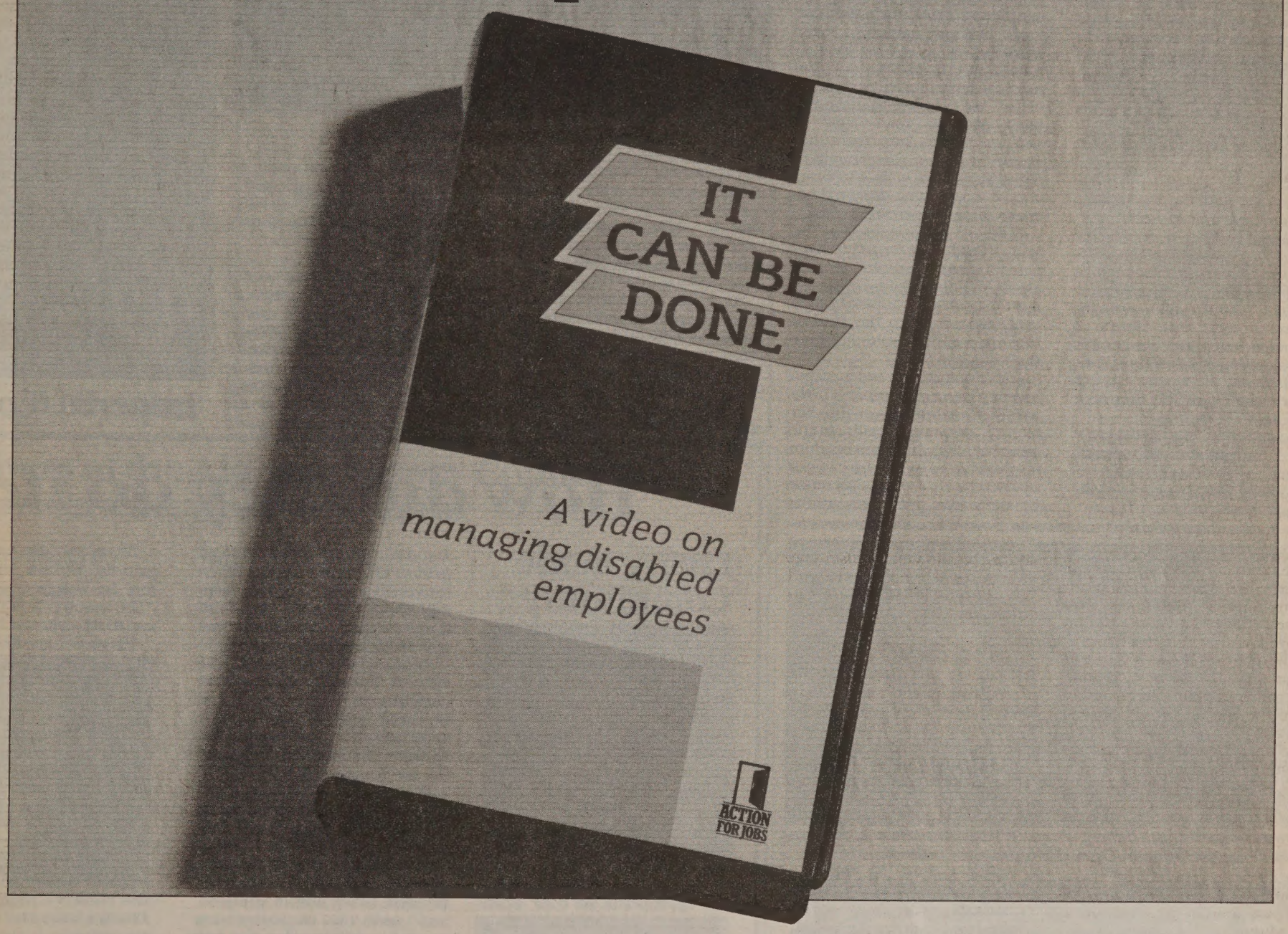
Personal allowances		£
Single person	– under 18	19.40
	– 18-24	26.05
	– 25 or over	33.40
Lone parent	– under 18	19.40
	– 18 or over	33.40
Couple	– both under 18	38.80
	– at least one 18 or over	51.45
Dependent children	– under 11	10.75
	– 11-15	16.10
	– 16-17	19.40
	– 18	26.05
Premiums		
Family		6.15
For each disabled child		6.15
Disabled	– single person	13.05
	– couple	18.60
Severely disabled	– single person	24.75
	– couple (one disabled)	24.75
	– couple (both disabled)	49.50
Pensioner	– single person	10.65
	– couple	16.25
Pensioner (disabled and/or 80+)		
	– single person	13.05
	– couple	18.60
Board and lodging allowances		
Ordinary board and lodgings		£45-£70
(max. special increase £17.50)		(no increase)
Hostels		£70
(max. special increase £17.50)		(no increase)
Residential care homes:		
Physical disablement	– under pensionable age	£190
	– over pensionable age	£130
		(no increases)
Mental handicap		£160
(max. Greater London increase £17.50)		
Nursing homes:		
Physical disablement	– under pensionable age	£230
		(no increase)
	– over pensionable age	£185
Mental handicap		£200
(max. Greater London increase £17.50)		

Allowances for personal expenses		£
Private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes		9.55
Hospital and local authority accomodation		8.25
Board & lodgings and hostels		
(higher rate)	– single person	11.50
	– couple	23.00

INVALIDITY BENEFIT		£
Invalidity pension		41.15
Invalidity allowances	– higher rate	8.65
	– middle rate	5.50
	– lower rate	2.75
UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT		32.75
SICKNESS BENEFIT		31.30
ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE		
Higher rate		32.95
Lower rate		22.00
MOBILITY ALLOWANCE		23.05
SEVERE DISABLEMENT ALLOWANCE		24.75
INVALID CARE ALLOWANCE		24.75
CHILD BENEFIT (no increase)		7.25
STATE RETIREMENT PENSION		41.15

THE EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE

Putting the Code of Good Practice into practice ...



You may already have a copy of The Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People. The new video "It Can Be Done" will show how you can help your first-line managers and supervisors to recognise and cope successfully with problems and objections, real or imagined.

For further information contact your Disablement Advisory Service through your local Jobcentre or complete and post this coupon to us. The Employment Service, OPS7, Rockingham House, West Street, Sheffield S1 4ER

Please send me further information on the new video "It Can Be Done".

The Employment Service, OPS7, Rockingham House, West Street, Sheffield, S1 4ER.

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ESDN

"I would like Mrs Jones to boast that her walking-frame has a built-in calculator and radio" – Heinz Wolff

Professor Heinz Wolff entertained the AGM audience to serious purpose by describing his Tools for Living theory: "an attempt to change people's views of the place technology has in alleviating disability".

His research at the Brunel Institute includes equipment for elderly people, which he calls "URINE technology" (Unexciting Research Into Necessary Equipment). He said he makes himself unpopular with other bio-engineers by accusing them of ignoring simple applications of technology which could help large numbers of people in favour of dramatic things such as artificial hearts.

Professor Wolff believes that technology for elderly and disabled people, so far relatively neglected, could be a profitable market for manufacturers.

"Here we have a population which requires appliances – whether they are cookers or washing machines or more specialised things like walking frames or deaf aids. Here's an area of industry which is capable of expanding and creating work, wealth and, of course, a much better quality of life for those who need these things.

To call them 'aids for the disabled or handicapped' seemed to me a very down-beat way of describing them, so I coined the phrase 'Tools for Living'."

He explained: "Mankind and tool-using are inseparable. All of us, no matter how untechnical we are are tool users almost every minute of the day. There may well be a case for looking at disability from both ways – not only from its medical and physiological point of view, but also saying we haven't got the right tools for these people and if we did they would be better off."

Professor Wolff would like people to be able to obtain these tools "without having to make sacrifices of autonomy by surrendering themselves to the medical system or the social services". He is trying to make the most common ones, such as walking frames, into consumer articles, which can be bought in high street shops without shame, and which are well-designed because there is a proper market.

"Old age is not a disease," he said."I think it is wrong that an elderly person should have to climb over thresholds by declaring themselves sick before they can have access to the kind of tool-kit which would improve their quality of life."

He would like to see a grandson buy his grandmother a bath-aid for Christmas, to enable her to take baths more easily, in the same way that she might buy him a screwdriver so that he can put up shelves. He sees no difference between the gifts, but admits that society at the moment sees an enormous difference. "I think that's wrong. It artificially isolates a whole section of the population from the kinds of fruits of technology which I believe they are entitled to."

He would also like to see the prejudices which make it embarrassing to wear or use special devices disappear, and for these things to become prized possessions, not "badges of sickness".

" I would like to create a situation where Mrs Jones who has a walking frame boasts loudly to her neighbours that it's got a built in calculator and a radio while the one next door is only one of those cheap devices."

Professor Heinz Wolff is head of Brunel Univerity's Institute of Biomedical Engineering, which he founded in 1983 after leaving the Medical Research Council. He has been on television in the Young Scientist of the Year *the* Great Egg Race, *and the series* Great Experiments.

The Spastics Society's 35t

Professor Heinz Wolff leaves the stage to loud applause.

Imperial College,

New and returning members. From left: Bill Huddleston, Andrew Berry, Douglas Shapland, David Hendon, Ken Coulbeck.

One new Council member

One new member was elected to the Executive Council this year. David Hendon, 38, is chairman of The Spastics Society's South East Regional Committee and a member of the Regions Committee. He has a multiply handicapped son.

Mr Hendon is a chartered engineer and a senior civil servant, who has been a member of the South West Surrey Spastics Society since 1981, for the last 3 years as its vice-chairman. He is also chairman of the White Lodge Centre, Chertsey. His special interests are services for profoundly disabled people and developing the role of local groups.

Four members of the Executive Council stood down this year under the constitution, and all were re-elected: Douglas Shapland, Bill Huddleston, Ken Coulbeck and Andrew Berry. The fifth vacancy was created by the resignation of Mrs Joyce Smith.

All 4 Honorary Officers were re-elected by the Council. They remain: Douglas Shapland, chairman; Valerie Lang and Derek Ashcroft, vice-chairmen; Bill Huddleston, treasurer.

Mrs Joyce Smith stands down

Mrs Joyce Smith retired from the Executive Council this year, after 16 years. She was chairman of the Society for 6 years before handing over to Douglas Shapland at last year's AGM.

In his address Douglas Shapland paid tribute to her work for the Society: "Her contribution to the improvement of the lives of people with cerebral palsy can never be calculated – her efforts were so very great, so very varied.

PPS

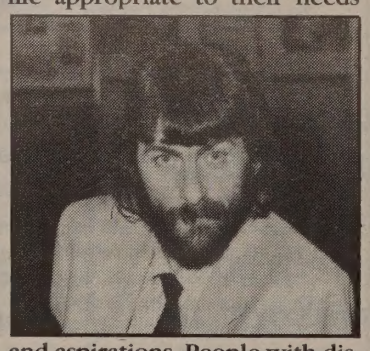
I can only thank her for her tremendous commitment over all these years and wish her health and happiness for the future."

How did they do it?

Living in the Community

After spending much of his life in a National Children's Homes special school and a Leonard Cheshire home, **Dick Harris** is living in the community with his wife and 2 small children. He found his first job when he was 28 and now works full-time as Development Officer for The Spastics Society's Midland Region.

"My experiences are not particularly unique, nor am I atypical," he said. "I believe many more people can live a similar life appropriate to their needs



and aspirations. People with disabilities need and should have direct access to service providers."

He himself uses community service volunteers – a new one every 4 months – who not only help him personally but under his direction take on his share of the household chores.

He acknowledges that a partner may find it difficult at first to accept this lack of privacy, but he and his wife Angie decided on volunteers "as we thought it was not good to mix the roles of wife and carer. This philosophy has enabled us both to keep our independence."

Dick Harris first started to think about living independently in his late teens. He went to Oakwood Further Education College to do "O" levels and an Open University course, but on returning to the Leonard Cheshire home he found the institutional way of life irksome.

"I often felt very angry at the lack of understanding by the people who worked there and objected particularly to their approach that people with disabilities should be grateful for the services they receive."

When he lost his temper he was put outside in the corridor to cool off. It taught him to use anger constructively.

He met Jack Hughes, founder of the King Henry's Walk independent living unit in Islington, and with his encouragement moved in 1979 to the new unit in Camden. Although each disabled person had the support of a key worker, Dick found it very hard to adapt and to take control for basics like shopping.

His biggest problem was facing loneliness and the responsiblity of making new contacts and relationships. "But if you believe in yourself you don't give up," he said. "I didn't." Eighteen months later he became engaged and moved into a flat.

Finding a job

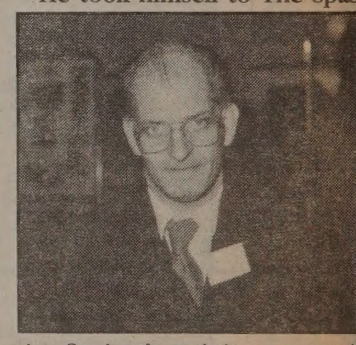
At the age of 18 **Roy Dredge** was told "You'll never work. You'll never hold down a job and you'll never be able to drive and be mobile."

He found himself in "the last resort", a sheltered workshop, doing simple tasks like making wire coat-hangers and getting £4 a month, less £1 for lunches.

"I realised an early and important lesson in job hunting: the need for sorting out priorities, the things that could get me to what and where I wanted to be," he said through his enabler, Karen Graham.

Being mobile was his mai priority. It took 3 attempts be fore he was passed fit to drive "The lesson is, don't be put off b apparent obstacles."

He took himself to The Spas



tics Society's training centre i Chester where he was accepte for a 6-month course in offic skills and received £10 a week "I bought myself a camera an spent most weekends drivin around and taking photograph I was out in the world on m own for the first time."

After the course, there was n job. He chose to be on the dol rather than return to the she tered workshop. A year later h was found a week-long work ex perience which became perma nent, but after 17 years of wash ing and checking lenses for spec tacles he was made redundant.

A few years earlier he ha bought a Mini automatic on th Motability scheme. Now with h redundancy money and hel from the Enterprise Allowanc Scheme he converted his "lif long hobby and love" – photo graphy – into a business.

"Although the busines folded, it had great results perso nally. It boosted my confidence increased my contacts and en hanced my social life."

At the same time Roy joine the Alpha Committee. Now he employed as development and re search officer for the North help ing others to reach their goals.

Annual General Meeting

Doug McKenzie, PPS

ondon 31 October

John Cox shares a laugh with Gill Long, Thamesdown group.

Society makes legal history

Disabled people who live in The Spastics Society's centres or receive other benefits from the Society, such as grants, can now for the first time be involved in its management.

In a move which made legal history, the Society became the first charity to amend its constitution to allow its beneficiaries to sit on the decision-making body, the executive council, provided that they withdraw from all discussions in which they have a personal stake and do not vote on any matters which affect them personally.

"We are opening a door which has been closed for too long," said John Byworth, who proposed the resolution. "If we are talking about equality it no longer makes sense to isolate from our management all those disabled people who are receiving benefits from us."

"This is a principle which could apply across the board for charities. I'm sure it's one that will be followed," said Nick Amor of the Society's solicitors Durrant Piesse.

members of the Alpha Advisory Committee* d of barriers they had overcome

Being your own boss

Louis Goldberg has been self-employed for over 50 years.

He joined his father's car servicing and funeral business after an operation by an over-zealous surgeon left him immobile.

He used to lie on his back on a little trolley called a creeper and pull himself under the car.

"Gradually I stood up and by 1941 I could walk considerable distances with a stick."

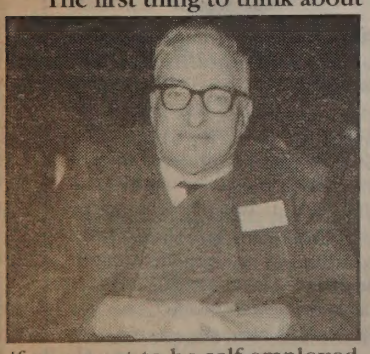
With Louis' business ideas and the help of his brother, the family business expanded.

Then in 1939 his brother went off to war. "I suddenly found I was on my own. It was very awkward – we had to get people in to drive vehicles. So in 1940 I started to learn to drive."

He passed his test – on condition that the handbrake had an extension. "Overnight I invented a handbrake extension which I made next day."

Nowadays the arthritis in his shoulders and hands stops him doing the engineering, but he does all the administration, diagnosing and driving.

"The first thing to think about



if you want to be self-employed, is what type of business you want to look at", he said. "Will it suit your disability? What training do you need and where will you get it? What finance is available and from where?"

He talked of schemes to help disabled people set up their own business: The Enterprise Allowance Scheme, Business on Own Account (BOA), and The MSC's Special Aids to Employment Scheme. But very few disabled people seem to gain from them. Louis Goldberg heard of only 2 on the Enterprise Allowance Scheme and 6 on the BOA in 1986.

Travelling alone

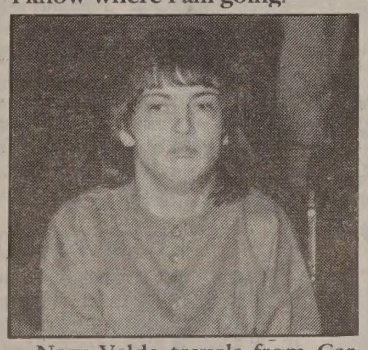
"I feel very strongly that people with disabilities should go out into the community *on their own* more often, for example to go shopping or for a drink," said **Valda Levett** speaking through John Per. "Everytime you go out alone you are changing people's attitudes because they can't talk to the person standing behind your chair. They must talk to *you*." Valda is in a wheelchair and uses a word board. She told of the ups and downs of travelling alone on British Rail.

On a trip to South Wales via London, she carefully typed notes to porters and taxi drivers to ease her path – and then forgot them.

She had alerted BR area managers at Liverpool Street and Paddington stations but when she got to Liverpool Street – no porter. "Luckily a man saw me in the guard's van. He got me off just before the train pulled out of the station again."

At Paddington, a nurse helping her started a cross-examination. "She was really talking down to me. In her eyes I was mentally and physically disabled. . . . It took me a good hour to unwind after my ordeal."

On the way back it took a phone call to the police and another to Oakwood before she finally got on the right train. "I had learned the hard way to always make notes for people along the way so that they know I know where I am going."



Now Valda travels from Cardiff to London for meetings of Alpha on the 125 Inter City which has wheelchair accessible coaches. Two nurses in the First Aid room at Paddington are "friendly and helpful" and will help her in the toilet.

She explained that British Rail needs to know destination, date of travel, time of departure and any stations where trains must be changed at least 2 days ahead, as well as on the degree of disability and whether you use a wheelchair. She advised getting to the station 30 minutes before the train leaves.

"It is hard work to travel independently when you are in a wheelchair and cannot speak but it is worth it to me."

**The national Alpha Advisory Committee (11 members with cp) transmits the views of regional and local Alpha groups to the Executive Council. Three Alpha development and research officers are working to increase the membership of Alpha and encourage new local groups. To contact your nearest officer telephone Roy Dredge (North) 091-386 2127 and Marion Bowen (Central) (0602) 411568. A new officer for the South will be appointed soon.*

Question time

To change or not to change?

The name of The Spastics Society was the main topic of discussion at question time this year.

Barbara Moss, vice-chair of the London Regional Committee, said the committee proposed that the Society should change its name as quickly as possible.

"The public is confused and professional credibility is being eroded by continued use of the present title," she said. "Volunteers stumble over the use of the word spastic because they feel it is not quite right, but they do not know what else to use when they see us still using the name The Spastics Society. It is very difficult to get the public education message across, and it is going to be more and more difficult to raise funds because people are confused about the double messages they are getting."

Ian Dawson-Shepherd asked for a straw-poll in the hall, and on a rough count of hands the chairman, Douglas Shapland, concluded a majority was in favour of changing the name.

John Stephens, chairman of the Devon and Exeter Spastics Society, thought the proposal to change the name was sad. "This society and its name have tremendous respect throughout the land and internationally."

Valerie Wardhaugh from the Rochdale & District Spastics Society said she was a spastic with an able-bodied son. "If you are bringing up children as a disabled parent, spastic is a name you can tell them to be proud of," she said.

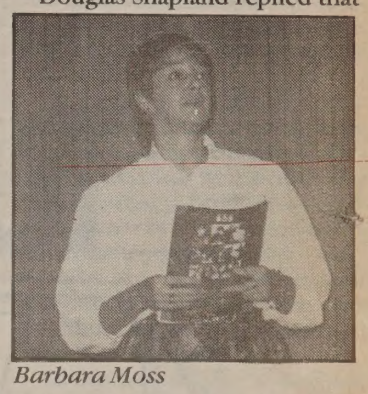
Hedley Chappell, chairman of the Portsmouth & District group, was "alarmed" at the discussion. "I wouldn't use the word spastic if it were the last word on earth. No medic uses it and no young parent uses it," he said. "The Society is distancing itself from these parents because of its name."

He was supported by **Doreen Banham**, chairperson of the Parent Handicap Information Group (PHIG), who said that of the 1,500 young parents who are members of RACE (Rapid Action for Conductive Education) not one says they have a spastic child – they all say cerebral palsy.

Doreen Banham also called for parents to work together for Conductive Education, and to put an end to "infighting".

Blodwen Yeoman, chairman of the Retford, Worksop and District Spastics Society, asked for the executive council to be more accountable to local groups and end-users. Speaking on behalf of the Mansfield & District Spastics Group too, she said they were "gravely concerned to learn that people are elected to the executive council who have no connection with either a group or a regional committee." She called for the constitution to be amended so that all candidates for the executive council must be nominated by a local group or regional committee.

Douglas Shapland replied that



Barbara Moss

this was "quite the reverse of what the Society has always been". People elected to the council are there to serve the best interests of the Society as a whole and not to represent sectional interests, he said.

Mrs Yeoman also called for more consultation with the regions and the groups."Let the people who you are supposed to serve tell you what they want and don't take it for granted that you know," she said.

Bill Hargreaves welcomed a review of the constitution, but "we should try and fertilise our thinking by bringing in people from outside the Society". He would like consultation with business and legal experts.

Rosemary Osborne, secretary of the Colwyn Bay District Group, was concerned about lack of communication between local groups and the head office in London. "Until you get around to bridging this gap you will lose support and you will lose the public's interest," she said.

Rosemary Osborne, founder of the Colwyn Bay group (left), chats with Ann Hithersay, director of regions.

More parent power in schools

Vice-chairman Derek Ashcroft gave a progress report on last year's two special resolutions: that plans should be drawn up for establishing governing bodies, made up of one-third parent representatives, in all of the Society's schools, and that by April 1988 a special committee should be formed of parent representatives from each school.

There are now documents available setting out the role, aims and responsibilities of the governing bodies, the rules about eligibility, elections and tenure of office etc, as well as a set of guidance notes for parents who become school governors. These can be obtained from all of the Society's schools and colleges. Arrangements will be made for elections.

A decision about the special committee will be put off until the next AGM, as it is still unclear what its role should be and who should be eligible to sit on it.

Sheila Burnett

OUTLOOK THEATRE

A Private View

Disabled people and women both find their potential restricted by an image of "the way they're supposed to be" imposed by (male) society. It is a topic Graeae is uniquely qualified to tackle with its all-female production team and cast of disabled women.

From left to right: Jenny Sealey, Letty Kaye, Merry Cross.

In Tasha Fairbanks' *A Private View* (Watermans Arts Centre, Brentford) the subject was handled with passion, warmth and humour.

The play is based around an art class, ruled by Wallace (Merry Cross), a bitter and dictatorial teacher, and her 3 students, Rosa (Jenny Sealey), Anya (Kaite O'Reilly) and Suzanne (Letty Kaye).

All 4 characters are disabled, but as the play unfolds it becomes clear that their greatest handicap is the stereotyped image of perfect womanhood handed down by the male art world (and by extension, society) to which their art and lives must conform.

Rosa is a deaf painter, potentially brilliant, who is loved by Anya, the mercurial, radical sculptress she lives with. Wallace sees in Rosa the brilliant career she once threw away herself on a talentless, patronizing husband who dumped her when an accident left her on crutches.

Before he left, he rediscovered the greatest work of sculptor Roberto Gambini. *The Shrunken Woman* was in fact a self-portrait by Gambini's wife Lucia which Wallace saw her do shortly before she died, wasted and sucked dry by *her* monstrous husband.

This image of a spirit destroyed haunts Wallace, making her cruel to wheelchair-bound Suzanne, who is searching for relief from a mocking bully of a husband, and over-protective of Rosa, whose frivolous joy in painting she fears will condemn Rosa too to become shrunken.

After an hilarious escapade dreamt-up by Suzanne, in which the students steal the Gambini statue from the men's gallery and give it back to Wallace, all 4 characters resolve the frustration of their personal desires by accepting Rosa's lesson: stop worrying about what others say you should be, feel or do and start acting, feeling and doing what *you* want. In the artist's eye, what things look like is simply a matter of perspective.

An imaginative use of the metaphors of art, femininity and disability combined with clever direction and excellent acting to make the production a real mistresspiece.

Julian Marshall

Look out for . . .

The Unicorn Theatre for Children (6-7 Great Newport Street, London WC2) is showing the following productions: 21 November – 24 January *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* (age 5 up); 30 January – 28 February *The Dragon Wakes* (age 6-9). For details *tel*: 01-836 3334.

"Water" is the theme for an exhibition by disabled artists at the Britannia Pavilion, Albert Dock, Liverpool on 5-6 December, including painting, poetry, photography, batik, collage and hanging sculptures. For details phone the organisers, Disablement Resource Unit/Merseyside Council for Voluntary Service on 051-709 0990.

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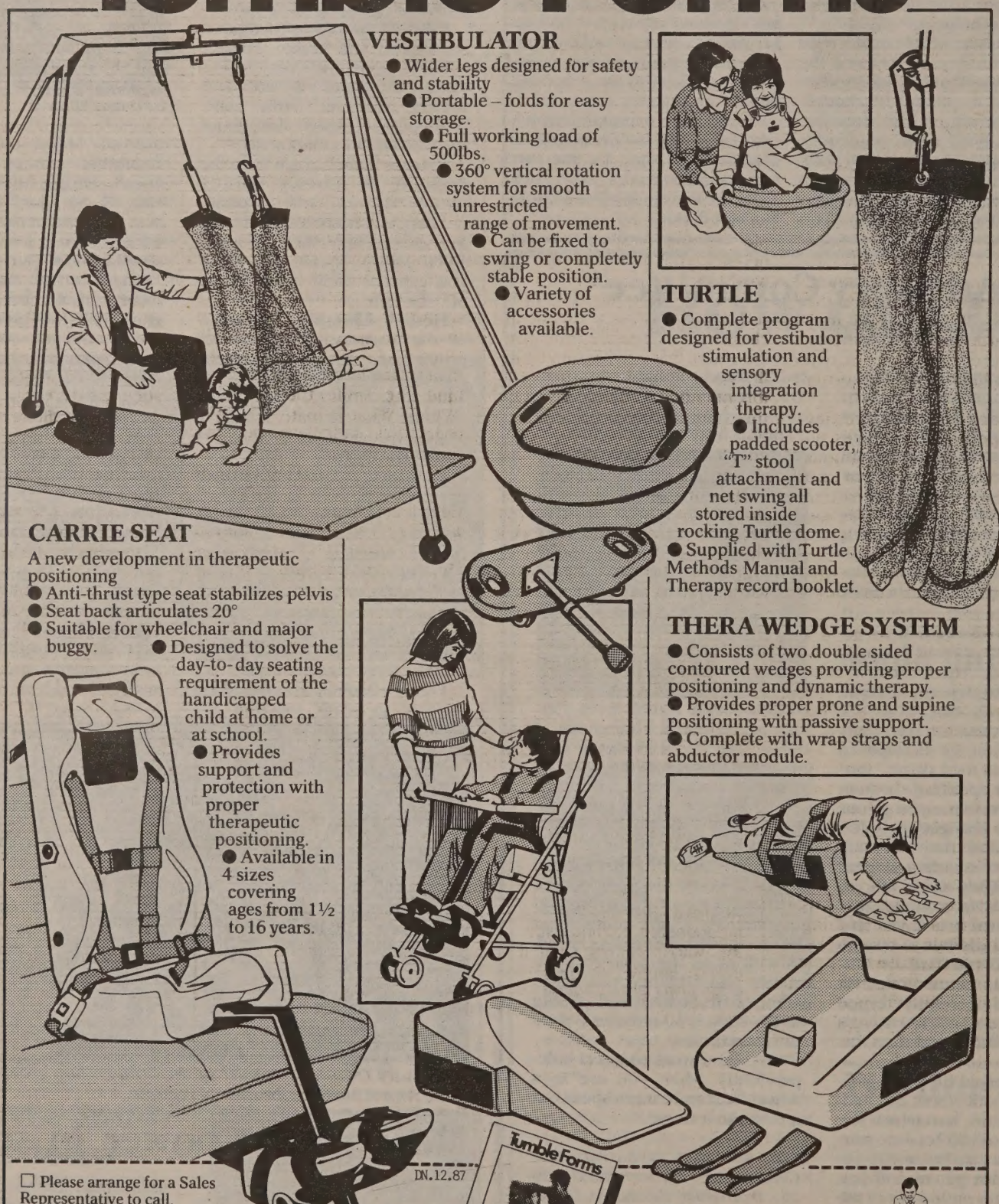

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OUTLOOK

THEATRE

Moving On '87

The 4-day *Moving On '87* Festival last month, organised by Shape and Chats Palace in London, included many familiar names – Graeae, Heart 'n' Soul, Jedelko – all producing interesting work. But "moving on" means just that, and I felt that the festival generally lacked new talent and new material.

Humour being my brief, I was particularly sensitive to old jokes and Jag Plah is exactly where he was last year when I saw him at the Albany Empire in Deptford. Many of his jokes were repeated without the laughs because this time many people had heard them.

While he was telling the one which starts "I want to tell you a serious story about my willy", a toddler went up to the microphone stand and shook it. I totally agreed. If I was only 3, I wouldn't want to hear those jokes either.

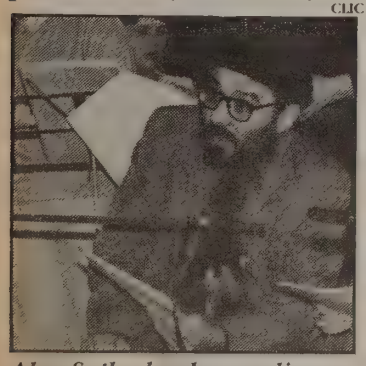
Writer Alan Sutherland, appearing as a comedian for the first time, did a better job.

I didn't know he had epilepsy. He made some interesting points about hidden disabilities or non-visible disabilities.

Alan said that when he was little and his parents asked him what he wanted for Christmas, he used to think, "If only I had a *proper* disability" and he asked for a wheelchair or a white stick. His parents said, "I knew we should have sent him to that blind school."

His jokes were often at the expense of ABs (able-bodied). He thinks ABs weird; he thinks "they" think we want to be cured and that "they" can't understand why we don't want to be like "them."

CLIC



Alan Sutherland, comedian.

He ended by saying that able-bodied people say things like "Just cos he's in a wheelchair doesn't mean he's not normal," and claimed that we should be proud to be disabled.

He came across as a well rehearsed lecturer rather than a comedian, but he held the audience in the palm of his hand which, after all, is what all entertainers strive for.

His material will appeal to disabled people, but is that the only audience he wants? Surely an entertainer should reach out to everybody – disabled, black, female, Jewish . . .

Although it wasn't billed as a comedy spot, the act with the most humour was Ellie Wilkie's. Her poems, full of wit, sarcasm and rich, ironic humour, were delivered in a very polished way. She held the audience like a seasoned performer.

Isobel Ward

Michael Cook

Adam Reynolds with his sculpture, Behind the Mask.

ART

Portrait of the artist as a junk shop

Tucked away, down a side-street off Kennington Road in South London is the Adam Gallery – the studio and home of Adam Reynolds, 28, sculptor.

Inheritance, his fifth and latest exhibition, takes up one room.

The ten exhibits have been placed so unostentatiously about the room that at first I found myself wondering if I was in the right place. But, yes, there they were: featureless plaster busts, hollow-eyed African figures, two gargoyles high up in the corner shadows.

I had seen Adam's interesting and outspoken appearances on television – making a fatuous Miriam Stoppard squirm on *Where There's Life* and chatting articulately about gargoyles and disability with *Link*'s Kevin Mulhearn. Last month he took part in the *Moving On '87* festival, running a "fire sculpture" workshop.

Gargoyles seemed as good a place as any to begin our conversation. Their small, misshapen bodies could easily be seen as grotesque parodies of his own, affected as it is by muscular dystrophy. But there is a lot more to it than that, as he confirmed: "I could take bits out and say this or that one's a disability experience – but it's all fairly arbitrary."

Though he has been involved with various disability arts events he is very doubtful as to whether there is any such thing as a valid disability arts culture. "In art people have always tried to get rid of the dominant mode of the time and get more in touch with their own lives. And I'm all for that. What I dispute is that you have to be so self-conscious about it."

In his new exhibition there are only two gargoyles – one of which is really too serene to be classed as such. Is he, I wondered, moving away from that very figurative form of expression towards something more objective and conceptual.

He agreed it was possible and said that he had very much enjoyed creating the two conceptual pieces on show: Burden of Dreams, an extraordinary feather-filled lead replica of a leather bag, so real that I had at first taken it to be someone's shoulder bag and not an exhibit at all; and the teasing Pandora's Cabinet, a locked, glass-fronted wooden cabinet, a third full of marbles, with its key hanging temptingly from a nearby hook.

This sort of witty humour is an important feature of his work: "it ensures that you don't get too pretentious. And you can get to people more directly. I want my work to appeal to a mix of people – I don't want to exclude people who aren't in the art world."

The title *Inheritance* is in itself a piece of wry tongue-in-cheekiness. "There's this preciousness that you mustn't be influenced. Some artists get terribly offended if anyone says 'Oh, this reminds me of ...'. I mean, how can you help being influenced – unless you just sit there staring at a white wall all day!"

His own alternative title for the exhibition, *Portrait of the Artist as a Junk Shop*, indicates the many and various influences and ideas that have helped to form his work since the decision in 1982 "to be a sculptor".

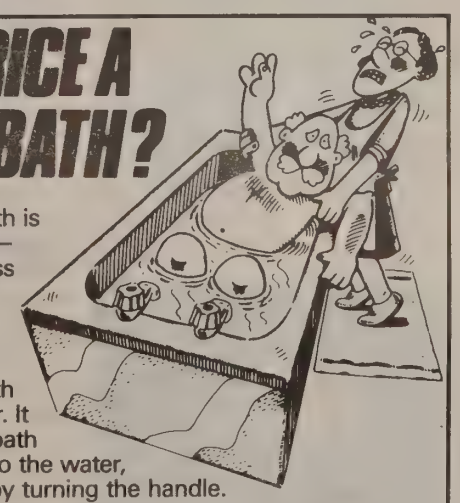
There are some obvious sources of inspiration such as Africa, where his grandfather worked, and medieval history – he studied history and modern languages at Sussex University – but many of the pieces develop almost with a will of their own.

One which arose from more concrete origins, so to speak, is Behind the Mask. The white plaster face is smooth and featureless, but the attitude of the head is one of shock. "It's a reaction that I can spot in some people when I meet them," said Adam. "Their face looks alright, but behind the smile they're going 'Whoo! What is that?' What I'm trying to do is challenge people's preconceptions."

Alan Durant

Inheritance *is at the Adam Gallery, 62 Walcot Square, London SE11 until 5 December (Wednesday-Saturday 2-6pm or by appointment).*

WHAT PRICE A RELAXING BATH?



Struggling to leave a bath is neither relaxing or safe—yet many elderly and less able people have little alternative.

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TV

Yesterday: why show us such despair?

The BBC showed the Danish documentary **Yesterday** (BBC1, 6 Nov) about 29 year old Leif who, following a stroke, was almost totally paralysed. The only control he had was over 2 fingers, which he used to communicate via an adapted computer and to steer a power wheelchair. Not surprisingly his mood was black.

In 4 years, Leif's physical ability improved from being bedridden to being mobile and communicating, but his attitude did not. Granted, a brighter outlook from him was discouraged by his apparently dispassionate wife, who by the end of the film had met and married someone else, but the tone of the programme was one of despair.

If the film-makers continued for so long in the hope that Leif's attitude or physical condition would change for the better, they were plainly wrong. Why they bothered to complete the film is a mystery – unless, of course, their attitude towards disability is purely negative. Perhaps this also applies to the judges of the Prix Italia, who gave the film this international award, and to someone at the BBC. Such a profoundly bleak image of disability can only fuel society's stereotype of disability as a tragic difficulty.

Whatever the pros and cons of making the film or giving it an award, the BBC should not have shown it.

4 What it's Worth (C4, 3 Nov) devoted an edition to Alzheimer's disease. Although most people assume this is a condition associated with elderly people, people in their forties can develop it. Put simply, it is premature senility. The programme explained not merely the situation of the carers, but also looked at those who have the disease in an unsensationalised manner. It was informative, not emotive.

The same goes for 2 repeated programmes from the **Coping** series (C4, 24 and 31 Oct), which looked at Jim, spinally injured in a car acciden . The treatment here was completely honest, without exaggeration, graphically describing the consequences of living with this type of disability. The best programme on spinal injury I have seen.

Separate development (C4, 13 November) was an excellent argument in favour of integrated, as opposed to segregated, education, for disabled children.

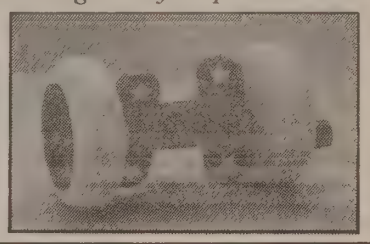
It is sad that this strong programme is apparently the last film commissioned from Interface Productions by Channel 4. Although it was made over a year ago and some programmes made later were shown before *Separate development* no new work has been given to this unique production company of disabled people.

Though I started Interface, my involvement ended 3 1/2 years ago. If projects such as Interface die, television is poorer, because they are our voice.

Chris Davies

Somewhere to play for younger children: the Jaka chair and table from Kirton Designs has a wide range of sizes and adjustments and optional footboard. Cushions and lap straps available. Low version (above) in red or yellow for 3-4 years: chair £23.50, table £36.50. Kirton Designs, Bungay Road, Hempnall, Norwich, Norfolk NR15 2NG.

Face painting (left) with Galt's 10 extra large Jumbo Face Paints, £2.60. Other ideas (not shown): a Disguise Kit (face paints, make-up brush, assorted crepe whiskers) £1.99; Secret Kit (invisible ink pen, developing pen, mini notebook for secrets and codes) £1.49. From good toy shops.

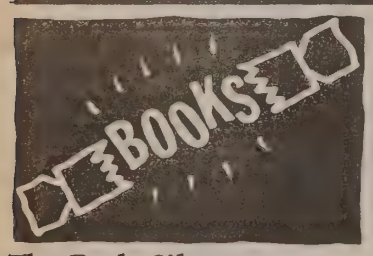


Elephant stacking, a variation on the usual beakers. Each elephant has a mould of a zoo animal on its back that when pressed in clay makes a picture. About £3.45 from Kiddicraft.

Hollow, round, wooden drum will produce 7 different notes depending on where you beat it. With drum sticks and stand, £33.50 from Toys for the Handicapped.

Windmill (above) has colourful sails that spin on ball bearings. Encourages reaching out and helps develop muscular control. £21.80. Spin-a-sound (left) produces different sounds when spun, turned or twisted. £5.50. Both from Rompa, PO Box 5, Wheatbridge Road, Chesterfield S40 2AE. Send for the catalogue.

Disabled dolls, someone perhaps to identify with, from Nottingham Rehab, Ludlow Hill Road, West Bridgford, Nottingahm NG2 6HD, £37.50-£47.50.



The Body Silent

by Robert F Murphy
(J M Dent, hardback £10.95)

This is a book which should be required reading for anyone seriously concerned with disability.

It covers not only how it feels to become increasingly disabled, with frank discussion about the effects of disability on personal image and family relationships, but it explores the place of disabled people in society and explains why that place is so low, using the experiences of disabled people and insights from philosophy, anthropology and sociology.

This approach makes *The Body Silent* unique.

Robert Murphy is a professor of anthropology at Columbia University in Washington. In 1976 he was found to have a spinal tumour and so began the inevitable drift into paralysis (he is now quadriplegic).

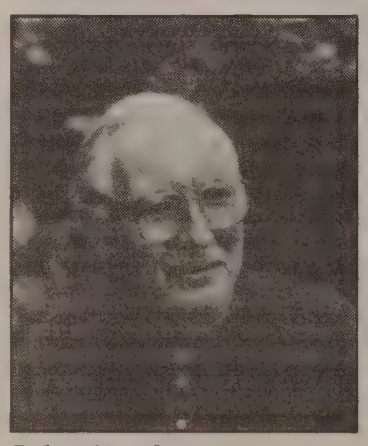
In the disability literature he could find no book written by an anthropologist and decided to write this one.

The result is a book of great power, heavy going in some sections because the ideas can be complex, but something you want to go on reading because it tells you so much.

The analysis of why disabled people are "low man" socially in America (along with blacks and the poor) is devastating.

Disabled people, says Murphy, do not conform to the values of youth, virility, activity and physical beauty that American culture cherishes.

"The disabled serve as constant, visible reminders to the able-bodied that the society they live in is shot through with inequity and suffering, that they live in a counterfeit paradise, and that they too are vulnerable. We represent a fearsome possibility."



Robert Murphy

He sees paralysis as an allegory of the human condition: the struggle between death and alienation on one side and love and life on the other.

"We live within walls of our own making, staring out at life through bars thrown up by culture and annealed by our fears."

The essence of a well-lived life, he says, is to fight back.

Mary Wilkinson

Skallagrigg

by William Horwood
(Viking, hardback £11.95)

On a summer's day in 1927, deep inside a Victorian asylum, 7-year-old Arthur vows that he will survive the hell to which he has mistakenly been condemned.

Severely disabled with cerebral palsy, his intelligence stays unnoticed by the ignorant, uncaring staff, though not by the other inmates.

Arthur's hope is kept alive by his faith in the mysterious Skallagrigg, someone or something he once knew who will one day release him.

Tales of the Skallagrigg, Arthur, his friends, sadistic nurse Dilke and the nightmare of filth at the asylum spread throughout the disabled community, creating a powerful legend.

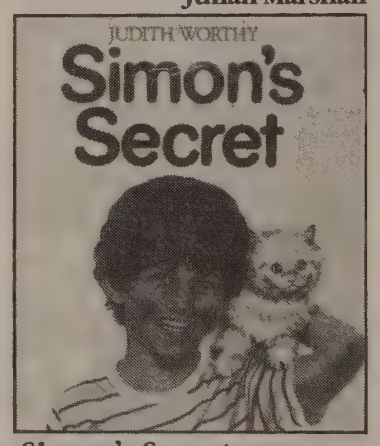
Nearly 50 years later, brilliant but equally disabled Esther is convinced the Skallagrigg is no myth, and with the aid of modern computers and equipment she sets out to find it and, if he is alive, Arthur.

The story of her life and quest and the secret of the Skallagrigg is told by an anonymous narrator, driven to find the truth after cracking Esther's "Skallagrigg", the fantasy role-playing computer game of the 1990's.

William Horwood, author of the bestseller *Duncton Wood* and father of a cp daughter, has portrayed honestly and accurately the difficulties and triumphs involved in growing up severely disabled.

Realistic and moving without being pessimistic or oversentimental, *Skallagrigg* is a well-researched celebration of the potential within all of us, able-bodied or not.

Julian Marshall



Simon's Secret

by Judith Worthy
(Angus & Robertson, paperback, £1.95)

The story is about a boy and a kitten who are both deaf.

Simon is lonely. He wants to play with the other children in the street but he can't play the game and he thinks they are annoyed with him.

Then he finds Snowball who is lost and keeps him in a hide-out he's made in a rubbish dump. He has to find milk and food for him. Snowball is his friend, and his secret.

Some children break up his hide-out and he tries to fight them but they laugh at him. He finds Snowball again but as he runs home he falls down a deep hole. Because of Snowball's miaowing, the other children find Simon.

I thought it was a fluke that the kids who had been horrid to him found him.

Also his mother was always washing, making meals and worrying about him.

But apart from these things it was a good book – for smaller children than me.

Clara Wilkinson
(aged 12)

Large print

For anyone who has trouble reading normal print, large print books make the ideal present. For adults choose from the Isis winter catalogue, including *Your Favourite Songs of Praise* (£9.75). For children, Windrush has a wide selection of titles, both modern and old favourites such as *The Jungle Book* (£6.95), *The Secret Garden* (£7.25) or the complete set of *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C S Lewis (£40).

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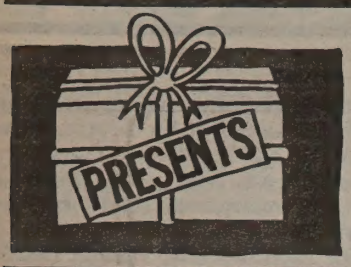
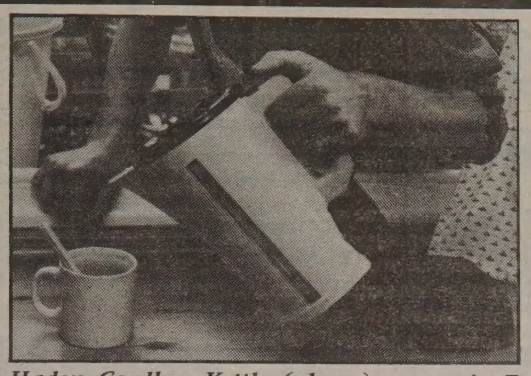
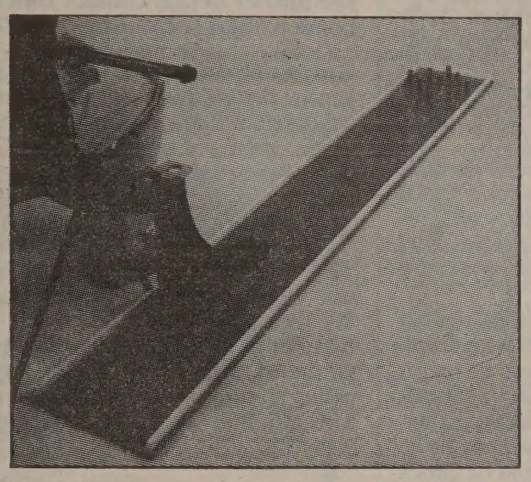




Haden Cordless Kettle (above) comes in 7 colours, including Christmas red, £19.95 from Tesco and most electrical stores.

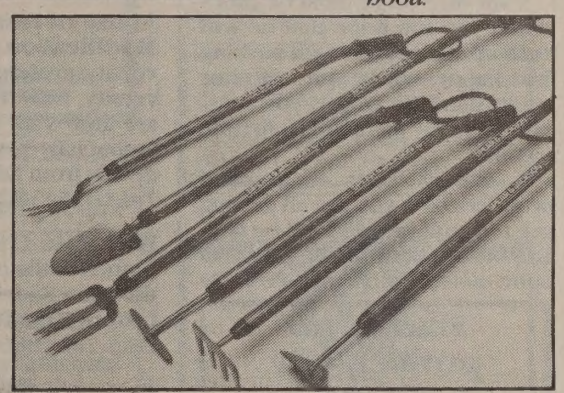
The Freshold Binocular Support should make bird-watching easier for disabled people. £29.95 from RSPB shops or Image stores.

Play floor skittles (right) from your wheelchair with no help. £62.50 from Toys for the Handicapped.

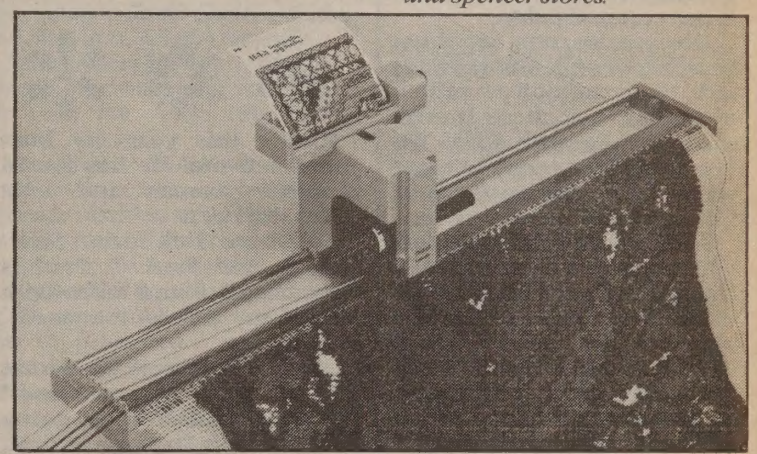


Pretty polyester pyjamas in pink or blue, 3-6 years £10.99, 7-10 years £12.99. Saucy slippers: Miss Piggy slippers and purse £6.99, Snoopy slippers £4.99, Mickey Mouse slippers and backpack £6.99. All from Marks and Spencer. Also seen for men: a waterproof trilby hat, more elegant than a hood.

Slinky, polyester (easily washable) camisole (£10.99), french knicker (£10.99) and wrap (£35) from main Marks and Spencer stores.

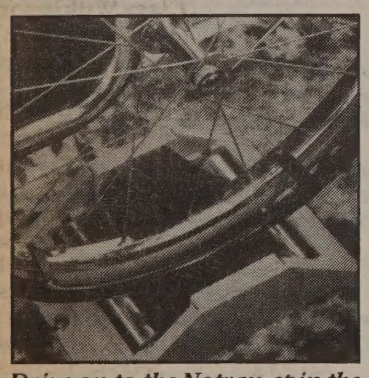


Spear and Jackson's garden tools are light, have interchangeable heads, and come in short or long length handles with detachable wrist straps. £9.99–£10.99.



The Tapimatic rug maker does the knotting for you. Feed the pattern into the pattern reader, follow it and turn a handle. £349. Fast System, 54 Friday St, Henley on Thames RG9 1AH.

Silk shirt in 4 colours, sizes 10-18, £24.99 from major British Home Stores.



Drive on to the Notrax, spin the wheel and the brushes will remove mud or snow. £35 from Paraid Ltd, Weston Lane, Greet, Birmingham B11 3RS.

Battery-operated can opener (above) from Viners' has a magnetic grip and safety unit. £9.99 from department stores.

The News, Portsmouth

Carolyne Jacobs Knitwear Design, 1 Eskdale Close, Horndean, Portsmouth PO8 0DJ, tel: *(0705) 593413 will take orders for fun sweaters, cardigans or knitted dresses for disabled adults or children. Hedgehog sweater, here, £23.99.*

Sit in comfort this winter!

Medipost, the mail order supplier of many useful products for disabled people, is making *DN* readers special Christmas offers on Mullipel wheelchair sets and suede wheelchair gloves.

Mullipel is 100 per cent polyester, has a thick pile on a latex, non-slip backing and can be washed and sterilised.

For £30 (recommended retail price £42.50) you can have a wheelchair back and seat, arm covers and matching slippers in red tartan, plain sky-blue or a flower pattern (bright pink and gold) *see above*. Slippers only, **£13.50** (rrp £16.50). Wheelchair set only, **£20** (rrp £26).

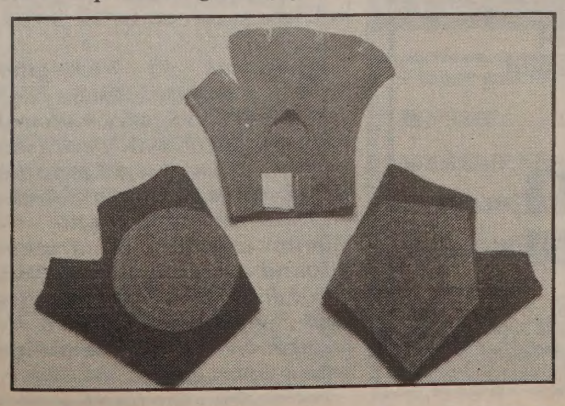
The suede gloves with reinforced palms have been tested and approved by Mary Marlborough Lodge. Choose from the wrap-around glove (*left and right in picture below*) **£5** (rrp £5.50) or finger-hole gloves (*centre*) **£5.50** (rrp £6.50) and from any combination of 3 colours: red, blue or grey. All prices exclude VAT but include p&p. These products are eligible for zero-rated VAT if a VAT declaration form (*see below*) is signed and returned with your order.

To order: Write to Medipost c/o *Disability Now*, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ stating which products and colours you would like and enclosing a cheque or postal order made out to Medipost Limited, and the VAT form. Orders will be processed within 12 hours of arriving at *DN*. Medipost will return your money if you are unsatisfied.

Medipost is kindly donating 20% from each sale to DN.

Sitting pretty . . . for £20.

Red tartan slippers, £13.50.



VAT relief

I declare that I am chronically sick or disabled and that I am receiving the products stated for my personal or domestic use (or for the use of a handicapped person). I claim that the supply of these goods is eligible for relief from VAT under Group 14 of the Zero Rate Schedule to the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Share Your Problems

With Margaret Morgan

When the "season of goodwill" turns into an ordeal...

Christmas is the time of year when families get together to celebrate and exchange greetings and gifts. Sadly, an increasing number of people seem to find the season of goodwill an ordeal to be endured, and "roll on January 2nd"! Perhaps we should aim to get back to a simpler and less materialistic celebration of Christ's birth?

For some people, however, family relationships can be difficult, especially if there are misunderstandings that persist, as these 2 letters demonstrate.

"We have 3 children and the youngest, Simon, who is now 6, has cerebral palsy.

His grandparents (my husband's parents), and particularly his grandmother, refuse to believe that there is anything wrong with him. We don't see them very often, but we will be visiting them at Christmas this year.

I know my mother-in-law will say, as she always does, 'I thought Simon would be walking by now'. I shall get angry, as I always do, then upset and so can't explain sensibly what Simon's problem is. My husband just glosses it all over, and there is a feeling of tension for the rest of the visit.

Can you suggest how my husband and I can really face the situation this Christmas?"

It is always difficult to share and talk over our deepest feelings with those who are closest to us, isn't it?

I wonder if your mother-in-law is really as unaware of Simon's handicap as she appears to be? Maybe she, too, is looking for an opportunity to talk more openly about Simon's cerebral palsy. This Christmas could well be the right time for some straight talking all round.

At least you recognise how you usually react and so can be better prepared to tackle things differently this year.

What about talking it over with your husband before you go away and deciding together how you are going to explain why Simon is as he is? It may, in fact, be wiser for your husband to take the initiative, if you can persuade him to do so.

What about taking some photographs of other disabled children or even adults to show your in-laws? Seeing the positive achievements of others with cerebral palsy can be encouraging. They may find some of The Spastics Society's leaflets or a copy of *Disability Now* helpful.

I hope that this will be a happier Christmas for all of you.

"Earlier this year my husband left me. He has found another woman and now lives with her.

We have 2 children, Sharon, 9, and Paul, 7. Paul is handicapped and takes up a lot of my time – too much, really.

This is the first Christmas we will be on our own and I know the children are going to miss their Dad a great deal. So will I, but I'm still pretty angry with him for leaving us. Sharon seems to understand, but Paul keeps saying that he's looking forward to Dad being back with us at Christmas.

I don't know quite how to explain things to him, as I am sure he will be very upset. I

Simon Crompton

think he feels that Dad has gone away and will be home by Christmas, for sure. I wonder how I am going to cope on my own this year."

I fully appreciate that this Christmas will be a very different one for you and the children. I do hope, however, that you will make a real effort to meet up with relatives and friends, so that the gap in your immediate family will not seem so great.

Have you been in touch with Gingerbread or Contact a Family, I wonder? There may well be local activities and parties that you could all join in over the holiday period.

Explaining to Paul that his Dad has gone for good will be painful, but it is probably best to try to tackle him now, rather than waiting until Christmas and then facing a great disappointment.

I am sure there must be times when you too hope that he will turn up again, as though nothing had happened. In spite of your understandable anger, you must also feel very let down from time to time.

I expect your ex-husband wonders how you are all getting on, too, and he may well be feeling badly about leaving you, in spite of his new partner. Possibly he will want to visit the children at Christmastime and give them presents.

Seeing their father again could be helpful to both Sharon and Paul, provided that they understand that this is just a visit and not for good. For this reason it would probably be best for this to be on neutral ground.

I am sure, however, that others facing the same problems will be able to advise you how best to arrange the get-together. An organisation like Gingerbread will also be helpful in enabling you to make new friends and in supporting you in your new life.

I do hope that Christmas will be better than you imagine and that despite the changes 1988 will be a good year for all of you.

Gingerbread, 35 Wellington Street, London WC2E 7BN, tel:01-240 0953, is a national network of local self-help groups for one-parent families which gives advice, information and has publications.

Contact a Family, 16, Strutton Ground, London SW1P 2HP. tel:01-222 2695, links families with handicapped children, by neighbourhood or handicap, into support groups.

Share your problems by phone

If you want advice on a personal or spiritual problem, why not talk to Lin Berwick, *Disability Now's* telephone counsellor, who is disabled herself?

Lin is at the end of the line on Monday afternoons from 1pm to 5pm, and on Thursdays from 6pm to 10pm.

Her telephone number is Hornchurch (04024) 58325.

E88 RIFTON YOUTH ACTIVITY CHAIR
The same chair for 5 year old to small adult

Rifton

EQUIPMENT FOR THE HANDICAPPED
Fully illustrated CATALOGUE available free
Robertsbridge, E. Sussex TN32 5DR – phone 0580 880626

What's On

Conferences and leisure

The Neti-Neti Theatre Company has started a signing group for people interested in the use of British Sign Language for theatre. There is a beginners group for those new to BSL and an advanced group for people who can already sign. Both are open to hearing and deaf people. Coming sessions are on 6, 13, 20, 27 January and 3, 10 February at The Handicapped Centre, 10 Warwick Row, Victoria, London SW1. £1.50 waged and £1 concessions for each meeting. Further details from Penny Casdagli, Neti-Neti Theatre Company, 44 Gladsmuir Road, London N19 3JU. *Tel*: 01-272 7302.

British Sign Language for beginners. Face to Face, Consultancy in Deafness and Communication, have organised a number of courses to introduce people to the basics of BSL. The first begins on 7 January. All courses are held at the National Institue for Social Work in London. For further details contact Paul Redfern, Face to Face, PO Box 756, London NW6 1BJ. *Tel*: 01-794 7607.

Graeae Theatre Skills Training Course takes place 15-25 February at the Little Crosthwaite Centre, Keswick, Cumbria. There will be sessions in mime, mask, movement, giant puppetry, voice and acting skills. Open to disabled young people. Fully accessible, set in beautiful countryside with swimming, horse riding and good food available. For further details contact Ashley Grey, Graeae, The Diorama, 18 Park Square East, London NW1 4LH. *Tel*: 01-935 5588.

'D' Day at Beans of Bradford. Yorkshire's largest quality mill shop is opening specially for disabled people, their relatives and friends on Wednesday 13 April. They sell clothes for men and women from a number of well known manufacturers at roughly half price, including garments with elastic waists, larger sleeves and in stretch fabrics to make dressing easier. For further information contact Beans of Bradford Ltd, 203 Westgate, Bradford, West Yorks BD1 3AD. *Tel*: (0274) 725177.

Abuse of Human Service Technologies: Drugs and Behaviour Modification is a workshop on 25-26 July 1988 at Manchester University presented by Professor Wolf Wolfensberger of Syracuse University, New York. He will explain what human service technologies are and what makes them powerful, looking in particular at drugs (especially psychoactive ones) and behaviour modification. Further details from Diane Sharpley, PO Box 6, Whalley, Blackburn BB6 9QZ. *Tel*: (0254) 822121.

Back Pain Conference. The third annual conference of the Oxford branch of the Back Pain Association takes place on Saturday 16 April at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Headington, Oxford. For details write to Oxford Back Pain Association, PO Box 276, Headington, Oxford OX3 OAF. *Tel:* (0865) 61272

Courses at Castle Priory

Art Work on the BBC Computer – covering the production of composites, use of printers, screen dumping and file handling. 4-7 January. Tuition £100, residence £51.35, non-residence £25.50.

Care Staff and the Micro for Leisure – a practical introduction to using the BBC computer with input devices and a survey of programs for leisure time, art, games, music and wordprocessing. 11-13 January. Tuition £100, residence £51.35, non-residence £21.70.

Communication through Music – a basic workshop for non-musicians who work with young and adult groups having special needs. 18-22 January. Tuition £75, residence £94, non-residence £34.

Clumsiness in Children – for any staff from ordinary or special schools for children with learning or behaviour difficulties. 29-30 January. Tuition £30, residence £28.15, non-residence £17.

Housing and Residential Accommodation for People with Disabilities – a practical course for architects, occupational therapists and administrators. 8-10 February. Tuition £85, residence £47, non-residence £17.

For more information or a copy of the new programme Winter/ Spring 1987 write (enclosing a stamped-addressed envelope) to Castle Priory College, Thames Street, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 0HE. Tel: *(0491) 37551.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Designing for the Deaf-Blind is a competition to design an item which will enhance some aspect of home living for a deaf-blind person. It's open to all students in full-time further education. Closing date is 18 January. First prize is the choice of £100 worth of Daler-Rowney artists equipment. Winning entries will be on display at the Hulton Sculpture Gallery, 108 Old Brompton Road, London from 22-26 February. Further details from Henrietta Bond, Sense, The National Deaf-Blind & Rubella Association, 311 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PT. *Tel*: 01-278 1005.

DIAL Solihull. This branch of the Disablement Information Advice Line recently opened. It offers information on anything connected with disability (including benefits and details of accessibility to public buildings) to disabled people and their families living in the Borough of Solihull. It's open 5 days a week from 10.30am-3.30pm. DIAL Solihull, Lowbrook Day Centre, Chichester Grove, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham B37 5RZ. *Tel:* 021-770 0333.

Change of Address: The Disablement Income Group (DIG) has moved to Millmead Business Centre, Millmead Road, London N17 9QU. *Tel:* 01-801 8013.

CLASSIFIED

For Sale

EVEREST & JENNINGS 904 POWER CHAIR with shopper & weather cape. New July '85. Used once (4 mls covered approx). Cost £2000, asking £1,200 ono. Mr Hopkins. *Tel*: (0469) 72383/ 571679

ORTHO-KINETICS "NEW STYLE" TRAVEL CHAIR complete with rain cape. Under 1 yr old, still under guarantee. £550 ono. V gd condition. *Tel*: (0949) 42034.

VESSA VENTURA INVALID CHAIR Includes battery charger. Goes up hills, any kind of surface, up/down kerbs. Brand new, never used, cost £1,500. £1,000 ono. *Tel*: Swindon (0793) 39361.

CHILD'S ORTHO-KINETICS TRAVEL CHAIR £100. *Tel*: Southampton (0703) 783148.

WESSEX TRAVELMASTER HOIST Electric push-button hand controlled, to lift in/out bed, on/off commode. Complete with 2 sets of lifting slings, takes up to 18st weight. Perfect condition/working order, little used. Willing to demonstrate. Cost £1,350. Asking £700. Contact C Furnell, 85 Bankfield Road, Liverpool.

METRO CHAIRMAN 1982 Blue, 1.3 auto, MOT, garaged, 4,200 mls. Immaculate. £3,900. *Tel*: 01-643 2076.

AVON BATRICAR nearly new, immaculate condition. Hardly used but needs new batteries. £700 ono. *Tel*: 01-368 1844 (after 5pm).

NEWTON 80V100 CONTROLLER electrically operated invalid chair. Excellent condition. £600 ono. *Tel*: (0283) 762296 after 7pm.

ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIRS/ SCOOTERS/BATTERY CARS. All makes, models wanted and for sale. Nearly new, hardly used from half-price. Demonstrations and collections. Free advice. All areas. Contact Mr Gibbons. *Tel:* 021-357 4965 anytime.

Find-A-Friend

COMPUTER USER Severely disabled man would like to contact others (disabled or able-bodied) through use of computer MODEMs to exchange correspondence, games and play chess. Perhaps to form a network of disabled computer users. Everyone interested please contact Robin Skells, c/o 39 The Ridings, Folders Lane, Burgess Hill, W Sussex RH15 0PL.

PENFRIEND WANTED FOR YOUNG MAN, cp, age 24. Interested in Dr Who, pop music and tv. Writes enthusiastic but short letters. Will answer all replies. Craig Harrison, 6 Middle Leaford, Shard End, Birmingham B34 6HA.

ANDREW TUCK I would like to hear from anyone who was at Wilfred Pickles School 1976-1983 & also Beaumont College 1983-1985. Please write to me at 2 The Square, Mosley Mews, Rolleston on Dove, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs DE13 9BU.

MAN WITH CP, 32, seeks genuine girlfriend, 21-32 for lasting relationship. Interests include concerts, cinema and eating out. I drive a car & can travel. Replies to 89 Gleneagles Road, Yardley, Birmingham B26 2HT.

PENFRIENDS WANTED by disabled woman. My interests include French cooking and language, travel, crafts, music, concerts, dining out & tv (Chateauvallon fan!). Please write to Elizabeth Young, Coombe Farm, Oaks Road, Croydon CR9 5AR.

CP MAN with speech disorder would like to contact an ablebodied lady of 20-50 to correspond with. Must have understanding of cp. Please write to Box No 170, *Disability Now,* (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).

WIDOW, 59-year old with arthritis. Car driver. Quiet cheerful, would like to write to male up to 64, also car driver. Nottingham/Leicester area. Please write to Box No 171, *Disability Now,* (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).

BCODP

BRITISH COUNCIL OF ORGANISATIONS OF DISABLED PEOPLE (B.C.O.D.P.)

DEVELOPMENT WORKER
£7,500 pa Inclusive

BCODP grew out of the Year of Disabled People in 1981 and is now firmly established as the national representative voice of disabled people. We are committed to the principles of equality and integration and are now seeking a dynamic, self-motivated Development Worker for the Midlands and North of England. The person appointed will ideally have experience of the Disabled Peoples' Movement and will be able to support disabled peoples' own organisations at a grass roots level as well as attract new membership into the national movement. He/she will also have some administrative experience. The post will be based in Ripley, Derbyshire.

THIS POST IS ONLY OPEN TO DISABLED PEOPLE.

Closing date for applications: **Friday 18th December 1987**

Application forms are available from: **BCODP, c/o Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living, Long Close, Cemetery Lane, Ripley, Derbyshire, DE5 3HY. Telephone (0773) 40246**

Jacksons Lane community centre

REQUIRES
A DEVELOPMENT WORKER

To Encourage the involvement and integration of groups and individuals with Disabilities in the work of the Centre.

Applicants should have: experience of community development; knowledge of the needs of people with disabilities; an ability to develop training programmes and some knowledge of the Arts.

15 hours per week at £9750 pro rata (based on a 37½ hour week). Initially for one year (subject to continued funding).

For an application form and a job description please send a large S.A.E. to **Jo Irons, Box D, Jacksons Lane Community Centre, Archway Road, London, N6 5BT.**

Closing date: Wednesday 16th December 1987. Tel 01-340 5226.

Jacksons Lane Community Centre is working towards becoming an Equal Opportunities Employer. Applications are particularly welcome from Disabled People.

TRESIZE COTTAGE purpose-designed holidays for families with a wheelchair. Send sae for full details to: Mrs Russell, Tresize, St Martin, Helston, Cornwall TR12 6EF.

HANDIDATE Friendship Agency

LET US TRY AND HELP YOU FIND A PENFRIEND, FRIEND OR PARTNER

All enquiries to: HANDIDATE
The Wellington Centre
52 Chevallier Street
Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2PB

This is John,
who used to have problems getting in and out of the bath
But not any more...
...not since he had the Appollo bath installed

Appollo
The beautiful bath with the built-in lift

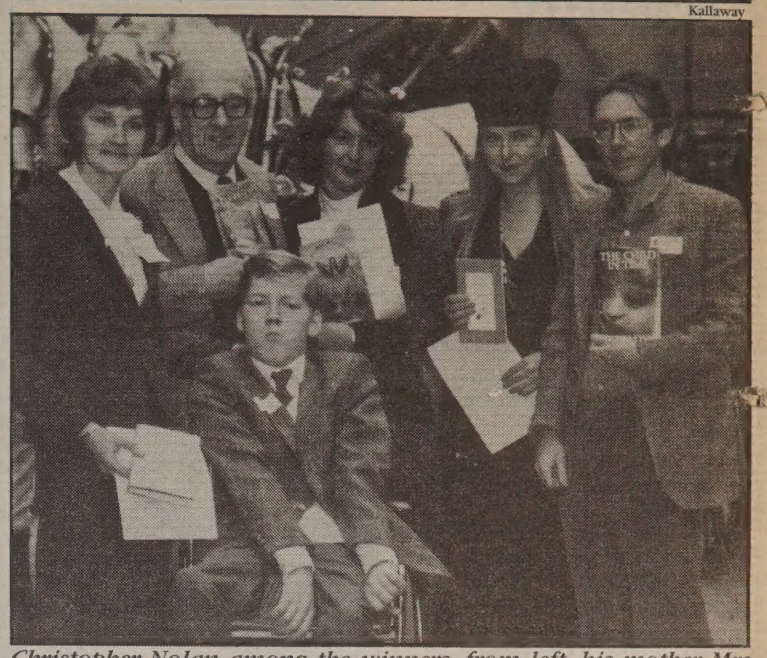
As easily fitted as a conventional bath – no winches – no hoists – no steps – no electricity just the free lifting power of mains water pressure.

For more information, fill in the form below and return it to: Appollo House Meads FREEPOST Nottingham NG7 1BR

DN01

Name _____
Address _____
_____
_____ POST CODE _____

PEOPLE



Kallaway

Christopher Nolan among the winners: from left, his mother Mrs Bernadette Nolan, Francis Wyndham, Geraldine McCaughrean, Joanna Mackle representing Seamus Heaney and Ian McEwan.

Christopher Nolan, 22, won the biography section of the Whitbread Book of the Year Award last month.

His winning book, *Under the Eye of the Clock* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £8.95) ostensibly tells the story of a boy called Joseph Meehan, but it is in fact his own life story. (See DN review, *August*).

Christopher Nolan was born and lives in Ireland, and has been severely disabled since birth. He writes with a unicorn stick attached to his forehead.

His book of poems, *Damburst of Dreams*, published when he was 15, prompted comparisons with James Joyce and Dylan Thomas.

The biography is now short-listed for the overall title of Whitbread Book of Year.

Holidays

THORNBURY HALL HOTEL, Churnet Valley. Specialised facilities for all disabilities. Companion service available (no extra cost) to allow all the family to enjoy themselves. Conference facilities and study/craft courses available on request. Colour TV in all bedrooms, single rooms available. Games room. Hotel stands in 5 acres of ground amidst beautiful countryside. Prices from £21.50 a day full board. For a brochure contact Thornbury Hall Hotel, Lockwood Road, Kingsley Holt, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs ST10 2DH. *Tel:* (0538) 757220.

Action Space London Events
require a

DISABLED PROJECT WORKER

for mixed media events with people with profound learning difficulties and multiple handicaps. These events are highly participatory and combine drama, movement and music in a sensory environment. The work is organised on a sessional basis with sessions lasting approx. 3 hours. Pay is at the rate of £16.45 per session; minimum one session per week (sometimes more) for 3 months initially.

In view of the nature of our work in the community this post is only open to workers with a disability. The work also involves occasional lifting and carrying of people and equipment, climbing stairs and travel around London (expenses paid).

Application forms from:
Action Space London Events, 16 Chenies St., London WC1E 7ET. Phone 01-631 4468 (Answerphone when office closed).

Closing date for receipt of applications is 18 January 1988.

ONE COMPLETED COUPON AND DISABILITY NOW IS ANYONE'S

Disability Now is *the* newspaper for disabled people. It will also interest parents, carers and professionals in the disability field. And it's free!

Every month it brings you:

NEWS
What's going on in Parliament, around the country and abroad.

VIEWS
Professional and personal on anything to do with disability.

INFORMATION
about benefits, conferences, services, aids and equipment, holidays, sport and leisure.

FEATURES
on politics, travel, motoring, micro-technology, fashion, books, the arts and personal problems.

If you're not getting Disability Now – or you know someone who isn't but would like to – just complete the coupon below.

Please put me on the Disability Now circulation list

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..... **Post Code**.....

Send to Gayle Mooney, Circulation Supervisor, Room 2B, Disability Now, Freepost, 12 Park Crescent, London W1E 3FB
(Donations gratefully accepted).

Sex and disability is "below the salt"

In an attempt to bring a "calm and reasonable atmosphere" to the discussion of sex education in schools, 12 national agencies, including disabled groups, launched The Sex Education Forum last month.

The forum aims to help teachers and governors worried about their new responsibilities under the Education Act and forthcoming national curriculum to draw up a sex education programme.

Launched at the National Children's Bureau in London, the Forum links representatives of family planning, marriage guidance and health visitors groups, Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches, as well as MENCAP and the Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability (SPOD).

In its first year, the Forum will try to encourage good quality courses in primary and secondary schools, promote training for teachers and stimulate informed public debate.

But at the launch, there was little emphasis on disability. "SPOD felt very much on the periphery," said Morgan Williams, its general secretary.

Although he thought that on the whole it had been a useful day, "the press did not ask about SPOD or show any interest in it at all," he said. "They were more interested in raging about homosexuality, catholic sex education and AIDS. It shows just how below the salt disabled sex is to most people.

"A common attitude towards sex education for disabled kids is 'well you're not going to need it anyway'".

"Because of this inadequacy in the past, sex education is particularly relevant to disabled children. It is really about equipping them for life."

Gene discovery

Scientists have taken an important step forward in the hunt for a cure for Duchenne muscular dystrophy diseases.

Dr Eric Hoffman and his team at the Harvard Medical School announced last month that they have identified the gene responsible for the condition, the most common of the group of muscular dystrophy diseases.

The breakthrough comes hard on the heels of other breakthroughs in the field of genetic diseases, including the discovery of the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis. Scientists researching Huntington's chorea and spina bifida are also close to pinpointing the genes responsible.

DN on tape

We are hoping to have *Disability Now* on tape in the New Year.

If you have *not* filled in the recent *DN* questionnaire and would like to receive *DN* on tape (initially it will be free), please write and tell us.

Your letter should state if you are registered visually disabled because we need to know who will be eligible for free postage.

Send your letter to Gayle Mooney, Circulation Supervisor, *Disability Now*, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ.

Turner Gee Studios

Wash-day Blues *Sally O'Shea showed the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher how she tackles her laundry, at the opening of a new John Grooms housing scheme for disabled people in Edgware, Middlesex.*

Parents win fight for consultant

Parents in West Yorkshire have won their battle for a community paediatrician to be appointed for their disabled children.

The Leeds Western Health Authority decided in September *not* to appoint another consultant for the children, despite the fact that Dr Jane Wynne, the only child development specialist in the district, had been forced to cancel her appointments for disabled children because of more child sex abuse cases.

But they changed their minds at a later meeting after intense lobbying by parents and hearing reports on paediatric services in the district prepared by the health authority's general manager and the Community Health Council.

A new consultant will start work next April.

"We had to make the health authority realise that they weren't just cutting back, they were cutting handicapped children out altogether by not appointing a community paediatrician," said Margaret Brookes of the Parents Action Group.

Easier cold weather claims

Claiming cold weather payments will be easier this winter, Minister for the Disabled Nicholas Scott has announced.

New regulations before the House of Commons will allow people qualifying for one claim to receive automatic payments for the rest of the winter.

But there is no raise in the temperature required to trigger the scheme – which was the main complaint last winter – nor has it been extended to pensioners receiving housing benefit or to families receiving family income supplement.

Disability *Now*

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ABC

Speech therapists are one step nearer to higher pay

The long-running battle by women speech therapists for the same pay as male clinical psychologists received a boost at the end of October when 2 High Court judges ordered an industrial tribunal to decide if the jobs are of "equal value".

The therapists' union, the Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs and the Equal Opportunities Commission have taken up the cases of 3 women challenging the NHS rates of pay.

The women claim that in spite of having the same responsibilities, qualifications and decision-making requirements, they are paid £6,000-£13,000, compared to the £8,500-£25,000 paid to the psychologists.

The judges appointed an Acas expert to decide if there is any material reason why the women should not be paid the same rates. If not, they will be entitled to an increase under European "equal pay for work of equal value" law.

Government called to recognise BSL as Britain's fourth language

As part of its Deaf Awareness Week, the British Deaf Association published a report calling on the Government to officially recognise British Sign Language.

With up to 50,000 people using BSL, it is the nation's fourth indigenous language after English, Welsh and Scots Gaelic, says the report.

Although more linguists and professionals are acknowledging BSL, it is still not officially recognised.

Recognition for BSL, accompanied by more funds for training interpreters and tutors, will ensure that deaf people play a greater part and integrate more fully in society, argues the report.

The attack on BSL, from which it is only just recovering, began 100 years ago when an international conference mainly of hearing educationalists decided using spoken English and lip-reading in schools would aid integration.

This "oralist" idea, says the report, is now widely regarded by psychologists, teachers and parents as having contributed to the low academic standards of deaf school leavers, whose average reading age is 8.

The report quotes from British and American academics, professionals and parents to show that using BSL with other forms of communication (Total Communication) has advantages for a deaf child's education and psychological adjustment.

Sign language interpreters form a bridge between the deaf and hearing worlds, stresses the report, so it is vital to increase their numbers. They are essential in almost every aspect of daily life, from employment, law and education, to politics and the arts.

In September, the European Secretariat of the World Federation of the Deaf, representing some 500,000 deaf members from the 11 deaf associations of the European Economic Community, put the case for the official recognition of sign languages by member states to the European Parliament.

So far a draft report has been produced which will be presented to the European Parliament, subject to ratification, early next year.

Britain's Fourth Language: the case for official recognition for British Sign Language, *The British Deaf Association, 38 Victoria Place, Carlisle CA1 1HU. £1.*

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